



14-3  
-----  
14

**LIBRARY**  
OF THE  
**THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,**  
AT  
PRINCETON, N. J.  
DONATION OF  
SAMUEL AGNEW,  
OF PHILADELPHIA, PA.  
Letter.....  
No.....

March 15<sup>th</sup> 1855.

Case, Division... *500*  
Shelf, Section... *3146*  
Book, ... *c. 1*









# DISCOURSES.

## I. On P R A Y E R.

Wherein are several Things, with great Impartiality, recommended, particularly, to the *Pa-pists*, and *Dissenters* of all Denominations ;  
 With a becoming Freedom, to the *Infidels* ;  
 With the most affectionate Esteem, to the Clergy ;  
 With the highest Deference, to the *Nobility*, and *Gentry*.

## II. On the SACRAMENT.

To which are added,

- I. A Sermon on the *One Thing needful*.
- II. On the Observation of the *Sabbath*.
- III. On the Importance of *Public Worship*.

---

By the Rev. W. WEBSTER, D. D.  
 of *Ware* in *Hertfordshire*.

---

Published for the Benefit of the AUTHOR.

---

L O N D O N :

Sold by JOHN and JAMES RIVINGTON, at the *Bible* in *St. Paul's Church-yard* ; and by WILLIAM RUSSELL, at *Horace's-Head*, without *Temple-Bar*.

M.DCC.LIII.

Price 10 s. 6 d. large Paper, 5 s. Small.

DISC 4048

THE DISC 4048

THE DISC 4048

THE DISC 4048

THE DISC 4048

THE DISC 4048

THE DISC 4048

THE DISC 4048

THE DISC 4048



To the Most Reverend

# HIS GRACE

The Lord Primate, and Metropolitan  
of all *England*;

To whose kind Approbation of my Undertaking,  
it was chiefly owing that I proceeded in it;

These DISCOURSES are,

*With humble Gratitude,*

*And the highest Respect,*

*Inscribed by*

HIS GRACE's

*Most obedient Servant,*

W. WEBSTER.

UNIVERSITY OF  
PRINCETON  
THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY

# HIS GRACE

The Lord's Prayer and the Creed  
of all Christians

Translated from the Latin  
into English by Thomas

The D. Thomas

of the Holy Trinity

of the Holy Trinity

London

HIS GRACE

of the Holy Trinity

W. B. E. S.

## P R E F A C E.

*WHEN I first proposed writing upon the important Subject of Prayer, it was objected that there was nothing new to be said upon it. Whether I have made any Improvement, I must leave to the Determination of my Readers; but, if I have added no new Materials to the old Stock, my Book, notwithstanding, may be more compleat than any yet extant on the Subject.—Where so many Persons of Ability have written upon any Subject, they have excelled one another upon different Parts of it; and, therefore, if any one has Judgment enough to select their peculiar Excellencies, and connect them handsomely together, their united Beauties must excel any one of those Books out of which they are collected.*

*Another Advantage new Books have over old ones from the Curiosity of Mankind. The World is more inquisitive into the Merit of modern Performances, and more inclined to look into them, than to enquire after those which have been long, like a dead Man, out of Mind. Books are like Fashions; when they become old, (unless they be superlatively Excellent, and the Authors of super-eminent Reputation) they are laid aside. The Materials may be the same, but the Dreels must be altered, or they will be thought awkward.*

*This*

*This is an Advantage that is owing to the Taste of the World; but there is a real and substantial one, which has its Foundation in Reason. Modern Books may not only be better adapted to the prevailing Gust of the Reader, but to the Circumstances, and Exigences of the Times. The Enemies of Religion and Virtue, like the military Gentlemen, are perpetually inventing new Weapons, new Evolutions, new Methods of Attack, which will require a suitable Alteration in our Arts of Defence.*

*I shall mention but one Advantage more, and that arises from the Disposition of the Parts, wherein the last Writer may excel by the Assistance of his Predecessors. Much Strength and Perspicuity depend upon this happy Arrangement; as in a Picture, where there is a Group of Figures, they must all be placed in such an advantageous Situation, that they may throw Light and Lustre upon each other.*

*By the Help of these Observations let my Readers judge and try my Book; but, as I write with Freedom, let them judge with Candor.*

*There are two Things more that will be expected from this Preface; viz. an account of the Additions that are made to the original Design, and why the Publication of these Discourses has been so long delayed.*

*The Sermon upon the one thing needful, and those upon the Sunday, had the good Luck to make so considerable an Impression upon many Persons, that I could not help thinking them worth preserving from the common Fate of sticht Things;*  
*the*

*the other upon the Importance of publick Worship, though a great Part of it is woven into the Book, is here printed by itself at the particular Request of a Gentleman of Fortune, belonging to the Guards, who happened to be at Church where I preach'd it.*

*For delaying the Publication, I have too good an Excuse. For several substantial Reasons it was bigly expedient that I should make the Design as profitable to myself as could honestly be done; but, the Importunity of my few Subscribers would not permit me to do it. I hope, many of my Friends, who might have Reasons for not encouraging my Subscription, will not be able to find any good ones against promoting the Sale of my Book; if not for my Sake, yet, for the Sake of Religion, at a time when it stands in so much need of the united and most vigorous Assistance of its Friends. One thing I promise them, that it is the last Trouble of the kind that I shall give them. I have, indeed, been desired to engage, again, as an auxiliary Correspondent to a Paper of the like kind with my Miscellany, which I declined, not out of Pique, but Incapacity: I can honestly take up the Wish of Cato—Whilst I yet live, let me not live in Vain—But, I must submit to the Decays of Nature; and am very thankful to God for the little Service that I have been able to do my Religion, my Country, and my King; besides some good Offices in private Life. Had my Abilities, and Opportunities, of doing good been greater, I am willing to believe that I should have done somewhat more. THIS I know, that my small Ta-*

*lent has not been hid in a Napkin. THIS has been, through a long Course of uninterrupted Fatigue and Vexation; This, I humbly hope, will shortly be, at the Hour of Death, my great Support.*

*As I am going to take a solemn, final Leave of the World, as a public Writer, it is fit that I should die, as I most sincerely do, in perfect Charity with all Mankind.*

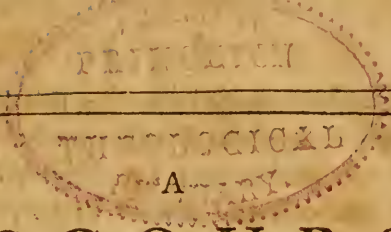
*To those who have given Encouragement to my Undertaking, I return my hearty Thanks, hoping for the Continuance of their good Offices. I must deny myself the Pleasure of being particular in the Acknowledgement of Obligations, for fear of giving Offence, where I should be glad to shew the greatest Respect. And now,*

*Christian Reader,*

*Vale,——et in æternum Vale.*

*Farewell——for ever.*

*N. B. In the following Discourse, the Chapter Concerning the Effects of Prayer, is, by Mistake, divided into two, at Page 87.*



DISCOURSE  
ON  
PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

*Concerning the Meaning of the Word,  
Prayer.*

**A**S Prayer is an Act of *religious Worship*, and a CHRISTIAN Duty, I shall, First, Enquire into the several Acceptations of the Word in Scripture.—Sometimes it is us'd in a *limited* Sense, signifying a *Part*, or *Parts*, of the *general* Duty; at other Times it comprehends the *whole* of the Duty; of both which Senses I shall give some Instances.—At the 6th of *St. Math.* v. 7, 8, it is used to signify that Part of *Prayer* which we call *Petition*, or craving Blessings, whether *Temporal*, or *Spiritual*.  
“ But ye when ye pray, use not vain Repeti-  
“ tions, as the Heathens do, for they think they  
“ shall be heard for their much Speaking. Be  
“ not ye, therefore, like unto them, for your  
“ Father knoweth what Things ye have need  
“ of before ye ask him.” From which Words

it is clear that our Saviour, in this Place, speaks of their asking such Mercies as they, *themselves*, did need; tho' when he delivered that Form which we call the *Lord's Prayer*, in the next Words, he gave it as a Prayer, *itself*, and a *Pattern* of all other Prayers, both for *ourselves*, and *others*, even *all Mankind*. Again, *Math. xxi, 22*. "Whatever ye shall ask in Prayer, believing, ye shall receive." In which Place our Saviour manifestly speaks of that Part of Prayer which we call *Petition* for a Supply of their *own personal* Necessities. I shall cite but one Instance more of this kind. *Math. xxvi, 39*. "And he went a little farther, and fell on his Face, and *prayed*, saying, O! my Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my Will, but thine be done." Now this is called *Prayer*, tho' our Saviour did at that Time, evidently pray for *himself only*.—In other Places Prayer signifies that Part of the Duty which we call *Intercession*, or begging God's Mercies for *others*. Thus *Math. v, 44*. "Pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.—And as *Prayer*, in the Places abovesaid, is used to signify *Petition* for Blessings for *ourselves*, or *others*, so elsewhere it signifies *Praise*, or *Thanksgiving*. Thus, *Eph. i, 15, 16*. "Whereas I, also, after I heard of your Faith in the Lord Jesus, and Love to all the Saints, cease not to give Thanks for you making mention of you in my *Prayers*. I forbear to trouble the *English* Reader with the *original Greek*, but the *same* Word is used in all these



these Places.—But, farther, sometimes it signifies a *vocal*, at other Times a *mental* Prayer.—First, *vocal*, or that which is utter'd by Words, thus, *Acts* xx. 36, “ And when he had thus “ spoken, he kneeled down and *prayed* with them *all*.” And, consequently, he prayed *aloud*, for, otherwise, none could have *join'd* with him.—By *mental* Prayer I understand the Soul's speaking to God *inwardly*, without expressing itself by Words, or *articulate Sounds*. Thus *Hannah* prayed, 1 *Sam.* i. 13. “ She spake in her Heart, “ only her Lips moved, but her *Voice* was not “ heard.”—Now, that this was *Prayer*, is evident from what she spake to God, which, doubtless, was a *Petition* for a Son; which *Petition* is, as I have already shewn, a *Prayer*. Again, The Word signifies the Prayer of a *single* Person, or of a *whole Congregation*. Thus our Blessed Lord prayed by *himself* alone, *Math* xxvi. 42, 44.—That of a *whole Congregation*, at the 21<sup>st</sup> of the *Acts.* v. 5; where we read that St. *Paul*, and the Disciples of *Tyre*, kneeled down on the Shore and prayed.

Having cited several Passages of Scripture, where the Word *Prayer* is us'd in a *limited* Sense, signifying some *Part*, or *Parts* of the *general* Duty; I shall now cite some others, where it signifies the *whole* of the Duty. 1 *Thes.* v. 17. St. *Paul* commands the *Thessalonians* to *pray* without *ceasing*. In this Place, I say, the Apostle ought, in any wise, to be understood to comprehend the *whole* Duty, for the following Reasons:

*First*, Because here is no *Limitation* of the Word, there being no Epithet, or any other Circumstance, which obliges us to understand it of one particular *Part* only; for which Reason it ought to be taken in the largest Sense, without any *Limitation* of the Meaning of the Phrase, since the holy Penman, himself, has not confin'd it, but leaves us to interpret it of the *whole* Duty of Prayer.

*Secondly*, *All* Parts of Prayer are equally enjoined (as I shall afterwards have Occasion to shew) in the holy Scriptures. Now, since the Word must be understood, either of the *whole* Duty, or of some *one*, or *more* Parts, I would fain know how we can understand it of any *particular Part*, since in other Places, all of them are commanded; and, consequently, all of them are equally necessary to be practis'd; I say, who will offer to determine *which* of them is here meant? It is highly necessary, therefore, that the Words be so explained as to contain *all* the Parts, since none must exclude *any* of the Parts of Prayer.

*Thirdly*, We are here commanded to pray *without ceasing*, consequently, the *whole* Duty is commanded; *without ceasing* cannot signify less than that we bestow all the Time that we can in *Prayer*. Now, if we bestow *all* the Time that we can afford to spend in *Prayer*, upon any *one*, or *more*, Parts of the Duty, and neglect the other Part, or Parts, which are, all, equally required, then we practise but a *Part* of our Duty, and leave the rest undone by us. And  
if

if God commands us in one Place of Scripture to bestow *all* our Time upon a *Part*, and in other Places commands us to practise the *whole* Duty, then God's Commands contradict and destroy each other, and make our Obedience *impracticable*. I shall confirm this Acceptation of the Word by two Passages out of the *Psalms* v. 2, 3.

“ O Harken thou unto the Voice of my calling, my King, and my God, for unto thee will I make my Prayer; my Voice shalt thou hear betimes, O Lord; early in the Morning will I direct my Prayer unto Thee, and will look up.” The Word is *general*; and it cannot, in common Sense, be *limited* to any *particular Part* of the Duty, since it cannot be supposed that *David*, in his Addresses to God, *confined* himself to any one particular kind only. But, the Conclusion of the seventy-second is more express. It is there said: *The Prayers of David, the Son of Jesse are ended*. Where, all the foregoing *Psalms* are called Prayers; tho' some of them be doleful Complaints of the Sadness of his Condition; others of them Confession of Sins; others Acknowledgements of his Dependence on God; others magnify his powerful and wise Goodness, and render Thanks for Benefits receiv'd, and promise dutiful Obedience for the future; by which we learn that *Prayer* is made up of all these, and is here us'd to include the Subject-matter of all our Addresses to God.

## C H A P. II.

*Concerning the Nature of Prayer.*

I. PRAYER must be an Act of the *Soul*, of the *spiritual* and *rational* Part of us : If it were otherwise, it could not be a *religious* Act, which supposes it to be an Act of the *Understanding*; neither, indeed, could it be a *moral* and *human* Action, for That supposes two Things: First, that it be *known to the Agent*; secondly, that it be *freely acted*. The Reader, I hope, will have Patience to wait for the Use that I intend to make of these Observations, which, at present may not appear to be so pertinent as he will find them to be. First, I say, it must be *known to the Agent*, because, otherwise, it cannot, in a *moral* Sense, be called *his* Action, nor does it flow from *himself* as a *conscious Principle* of Action. And, if it be not *freely acted*, it cannot be *imputed* to him, whether it be good, or bad. *Prayer*, therefore, must be performed by one that *knows* when *he prays*, and is *conscious of what he does*; without which *Knowledge* and *Consciousness* a *Parrot* may pray, as well as a *Man*, forasmuch as the *Bird* may be taught to utter the *Words* of a Prayer. *Freedom* of Action is, likewise, as necessary as *Knowledge* and *Consciousness*, because, otherwise, a *musical Instrument* may be said to pray when it is made, as it may be made by a Performer, to utter articulate Sounds. It is the *Soul*, then, the *Thought* of the

the *Mind* that makes our Words Prayer. If he knows what he says, and *means*, and *wills* the doing it, this makes it an Action flowing from *himself*, and is truly and properly Prayer. If,

2. To this *Knowledge*, *Consciousness*, and *Intention* we add the *Direction of the Mind* while we *speak the Words*. Prayer is *speaking* to the Object of our Prayers, or *conversing* with him; but, unless the *Mind* be *directed* to him while the *Mouth* utters the Words, we *cannot* properly be said to *speak* to him, or *converse* with him, the *Mouth* being only the *Soul's INSTRUMENT* in Conversation. It is the *Soul*, only, that *converses*, and its *Conversation* is, its being *directed* to the Object with whom it *converses*. *David*, in the Words which I have already quoted, has rightly defined the *Nature of Prayer*. I will DIRECT my Prayer unto thee, and will LOOK UP. And, elsewhere, he speaks of *lifting up* his Soul. This is what distinguishes Prayer from *Contemplation*, *Reading*, or *Hearing* the Words of Prayer. Tho' this necessary Distinction may be *quite new* to a great many of my Readers, the most ordinary Capacity may clearly understand it, if he will but observe how his *Mind*, as well as his *Voice*, is directed to a *Man* when he *speaks* to him.

Before I proceed any farther in the *Chain* of my Work, I shall stop, to apply what I have said concerning the *Nature of Prayer*, to the People of the *Church of England*, the *Dissenters*, and the *Papists*.

*First*, I would desire those of my Readers, who are of *the Church of England*, to recollect what has pass'd in their Minds at their Devotions, whether in *publick*, or in *private*; comparing it with what I have above said, concerning the *Nature* of that Action of the Mind which is properly *Prayer*, lest they should have mistaken *bearing*, or *reading*, of Prayers, for *praying*; for, it is evident that a Man may be attentive to every Part of the Service which the Minister reads at *Church*, or he, himself, reads out of a Book in his *Closet*; and that he may feel himself very much affected with what he *bears*, or *reads*, and, yet never *pray* at all. In order to illustrate my Meaning, I shall instance in that Part of Prayer which we call *Confession*; while the Minister is reading it, let the Congregation have in their Minds ever so distinct a View of the Force of every Branch of it; let them, at that Time, be possessed with the strongest Sense of their *Guilt*, and *Folly*; let the Passions of Self-indignation, Shame, and Fear, be ever so strongly excited, and their Resolutions of Amendment ever so firmly fixed, yet *all this* does not amount to *praying*, or *confessing*, any more than *bearing* a *Sermon*, or *reading* a *Discourse* upon that Subject, with the same Affections, does. This Act of the Mind consists in *addressing*, or *speaking*, those Thoughts to the Object of our Worship. If this *Address* of the Mind be accompanied with a *Voice*, and *outward Gestures*, we then, *speak* to him in the same manner that we speak to *one another*; but, as the Object of

our Worship is always *present* to our Minds, and *privy* to all our Thoughts, we may *speak* to him by an *internal Direction* of our *Souls*, without the Help of the *Organs of Speech*, or of *bodily Gestures*; but, without this *Direction*, or *Address* of the *Mind*, which is properly, *speaking*, we cannot be said to *confess* our Sins, but only to *think* of them. And thus it is with regard to every other Part of Prayer. It is very difficult to make myself understood by common Readers, who are unaccustomed to *Distinctions* of this kind, or, indeed of any other; but, I express myself as intelligibly as I can; and the Subject is of such Importance that it deserves their most serious Attention, and Consideration, in order to know whether they have *really* performed the Duty of *Prayer*, or only *seemed* to have done it; for, upon the *Propriety* of their *Performance* must, in a great measure, depend the *Success* of it.

In answer to this, it may be objected, that the *Congregation*, by saying *Amen*, at the end of every *Collect* do as effectually make the *whole* their *own*; and that by *directing* their Minds to God while they repeat *that Word*, they may be as truly said to have offered up *every Part* of it, as if they had offered up every Part of it along with the *Minister*: But, this I must utterly deny. They do, indeed, thereby publicly declare to the *People* their *Approbation* of the whole, and offer up to *God* the *whole Collect together*; but it is not the same thing as if they had *so* joined with the *Minister* in *every Part* of the *Collect*, as to have *offer'd up* every Part of it in their

*own Minds* (by such a *Direction* of them as I have been speaking of) *at the same Time* that the Minister spoke the Words; neither can such a *general* Offering up the *whole*, after the Minister has done, have the *same Effect* upon the Minds of the *People*, as if they had, all along, *joined* with *him* in a *particular* Direction of every *Part* of it to God, at the *same Time* that *he* did. To illustrate this, let us suppose the Congregation, *knowing*, and *remembering*, every *Part* of a Collect, not to attend to it while the *Minister* is *reading*, but to think of something else till he has read the *whole*, and then to say *Amen*; I ask, would this be *as truly*, and *effectually*, offering up to God every *Part* of it *in their own Minds*, as if they had *joined* with him in a particular Direction of their Minds to God, thro' every *Part* of it at the same *Time* *with him*; yet, saying *Amen*, at the end of those Collects which we do not *repeat* after the *Minister*, is necessary in order to *publish* our having *mentally* joined in every *Part* of it.

2. It is possible that this Discourse may chance to fall into the Hands of some of the *Dissenters*; and, if it should, with the utmost Benevolence and *Christian Affection* I intreat them seriously to apply what I have said to *themselves*; hoping, that they will have Integrity and Wisdom enough to lay aside all manner of Prejudice, and weigh this important Affair with the Impartiality which it deserves. It is very far from my Intention to be any ways affrontive or provoking, (and let the Reader remember this in every *Part* of my Book, where



where I may have Occasion to mention the *Dissenters*) but *Justice* to the *Subject*, and *Charity* to *them*, oblige me to declare plainly that, in my Opinion, it is *absolutely impossible* for any of the *Dissenters*, besides their *Teachers*, properly to *pray* in their *Meetings*, or in their *Families*; they only *bear* Prayers, in the very same manner as they *bear* the *Sermon*. We, of the *Church of England*, having a *Form* of Prayer, the *Congregation* may, if they please, make themselves thoroughly acquainted with all the *Parts* of it, and knowing, beforehand, what the *Minister* is going to say, they may accompany him all along, and while *he* pronounces the *Words*, they may, at the *same time*, *direct* their *Thoughts* to God, and by that means make it *their* Prayer, as well as the *Minister's*; and both *theirs* and *his* a *joint* Prayer; but, a *Dissenting Teacher* offers up a Prayer of his own private Conception, unknown, beforehand, to his *Congregation*; and, therefore, their *Minds* must constantly be employed in attending to what he is going to say; and in judging of it; and, consequently, never can have time, *themselves*, to offer up to God, by the *Direction* of their *own Minds*, any Part of *his* Prayer; much less can the *Minister* and the *People* offer up the *same Prayer*, at the *same Time*, because *he* must actually have offer'd up every Part of it before they can tell what he will say.

3. As this is a Matter of very great Importance, I shall conclude this Part with a *joint* Application to *Church People* and *Dissenters*. It is really  
 strange

strange that so groundless a Conceit should ever enter into Mens Heads, as that *bearing* another pray should be *praying*. And yet, it is manifest, from daily Experience, that the Generality of Mankind *do* think that they *pray* when they only hear *another* pray: Whereas (as I have observed) unless I speak to God, *myself*; unless *my own Soul* discourses with him, I cannot be said to *pray*. Suppose, for instance, I should be in a Room when two Persons are *discoursing together*, and should hear all that they said, but did not say one Word *myself*; surely, nobody could be so senseless as to imagine that I discoursed with either of those Persons to whom I did not utter one Syllable. Even so, if I should be in a *Church*, or a *Meeting-house*, and hear the *Minister* discourse *with*, or speak *to* God, that is, *pray* to him, either by a *written* Form, or a *pre-composed*, or *extemporary* Prayer of the *Minister's* own drawing up; I say, I, *myself*, could not be said to *pray*, unless I directed those Thoughts to God which the Words expressed. Whereas, alas! if People be present in a Place of *publick* Worship; if they feel themselves affected with the Subject-matter of the Prayer, with the Voice, or Delivery, of the *Reader*, or *Speaker*; if any of these things have suggested pious Sentiments, and excited pious Dispositions, then they fancy that they have been *praying*, all that time, with great Devotion. But this is a mere Delusion; for, do but consider a little. I may be very much affected with the *bearing* of a melancholy Story, and not *speak* that Story *myself*; and I do not

*speak*

*Speak* it unless my *Mind* be directed to the Person to whom I would speak. I may be mov'd with a Man's Complaint of his own, or another Person's Misfortunes, and yet not make that Complaint, *myself*; and all the Actions of the other Party cannot be called *mine*, because I never made them so, by *speaking* the Words, *myself*, either *vocally*, or *mentally*. Thus it is in the case of *Pray.r.* I may be deeply touched by hearing the *Minister* bewail his own, and other Mens Sins, and importunately beg for Mercy, and Forgiveness, and yet, not make *his* Confession *mine*, for want of that *Direction* of my own *Mind*, without which it cannot be Prayer, because it is not *speaking* to God, or *discoursing* with him. I have taken the more Pains to make this essential Matter so plain, because it has not been often explained, and is little understood by common Readers.

4. But, the Case of the *Papists*, with regard to their *publick Prayers*, is infinitely worse than that of our common *Church* People, or the *Dissenters* from our *established Worship*. Indeed, I think I have proved very fairly that the *Dissenters*, not knowing beforehand what the *Minister* will say in his Prayer, can never make *his* Prayer *theirs* while *he* is praying, much less make it *jointly with* him, and cannot properly be said ever to *pray*, either in their *Meetings*, or in their *Family Devotions*; yet, they may *edify* by *hearing* their *Minister* pray, just as they may edify by his *Sermons*, or by reading a *good Book*. Their Judgments may be informed, their Passions

fions excited, and such Impressions left upon their Minds, as may be productive of good Fruits: But, it is impossible for the *illiterate* People of the *Romish* Communion, either to *join* in their publick Prayers, or to be in the least *edified* by them, because they cannot *understand* them; neither can a Person who prays in a Tongue which he does not *understand*, be, properly, said to *pray* at all: For, as I have already proved, *praying* to any Person is, *speaking* to him, or *conversing* with him; but *speaking* to any Person, or *conversing* with him, is communicating, or expressing, our *Thoughts* to him. But, what *Ideas*, what *Thoughts*, can any one have in his Mind when he speaks he does not know *what*? The *Words* may contain very proper *Sentiments*, but they cannot be *his* Sentiments, because they are, to *him*, no Sentiments at all, for want of understanding the Meaning of the *Words* which express them. This, I am sure, was *St. Paul's* Opinion (1 Cor. xiv. 16.) “How, says the Apostle, shall he that occupieth the Room of the  
“ *unlearned*, (that is, how shall the *unlearned*  
“ Person, who does not know what thou speak-  
“ est in a *strange* Language) say *Amen* at thy  
“ giving of Thanks, seeing he understandeth  
“ not what thou sayest; for thou verily givest  
“ Thanks well, but the other is not edified.”  
And this he calls *speaking into the Air*; that is, *to no purpose*. Wherefore in the Opinion of this *inspired* Writer, a Man must *understand* what is said in Prayer, or he cannot make it his *own* Prayer by saying *Amen* to it. Neither is it possible

sible that such an Action as this, where neither the *Understanding*, nor the *Affections*; neither the *Head*, nor the *Heart* are concerned, should have any Effect towards answering any of the *Ends* of Prayer. From whence appears the gross Corruption of the *Latin* Service of the Church of *Rome*. For, suppose that the *Priest* does understand what he says, and consequently does truly *pray*; yet, he prays *alone*, and all the *illiterate* Part of the Congregation stand like *Ideots*, either hearing him speak, or speaking, themselves, such Words as they do not understand a Syllable of; and, therefore do not *pray* at all: So that the great *Christian* Duty of worshipping God in *publick Assemblies*, is rendered *impracticable* by the *common* People; God loses his *Honour*, and the poor deluded Wretches lose the Opportunity of performing a most necessary, and comfortable Service. We have, indeed, Reason to hope, and believe, that tho' they are so unhappy as to lose the present Advantages, and Satisfaction of discharging their Duty, their *invincible Ignorance* is excusable; but, for their *Rulers*—, who *introduced*, and continue this infamous Corruption, the *largest Charity* can do no more than recommend them to the infinite Mercies of God. But, what infinite Reason have *we*, WE OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, more especially, to be thankful to *God's Goodness*, as for other Parts of the *Reformation*, so particularly for giving us the best Opportunity, and the best Means, of performing towards him the very best, that is, the most *reasonable* Service;

of

of offering up such *joint* publick Prayers as do truly deserve that Name! May we all be as thankful for these Blessings, and as diligent in the Use, as we are happy in the Enjoyment, of them; or our Ingratitude will be an Aggravation of our Guilt in neglecting them.

Having distinctly consider'd the *Nature* of Prayer, and shewn wherein it *differs* from *Contemplation*; the next Thing to be consider'd is, the proper *Object* of our Prayers.—Under which Head I do not intend to give an *historical Account*, much less a *Confutation* of all the several *Kinds* of *Idolatry* that have been practis'd among *Heathens*, *Jews*, and *Christians*, but only to enquire how far all *invisible Creatures*, as such, are excluded from being proper *Objects* of our Prayers.

### C H A P III.

#### *Concerning the Object of Prayer.*

**P**RAYER, as I have shewn, is that Act of the Mind by which we *address* our Thoughts, *direct*, or *speak*, them to another Being. This we, *Men*, are capable of doing to one another, either to ask the Assistance of each other, to acknowledge the Receipt of Benefits, or to express the good Opinion which we entertain of one another. And all this is very right while we keep within proper Bounds; that is, while we do not *ask* any thing of a *Man* which none but *God* can give, as the King of *Assyria* did  
when

when he sent his *General* to the King of *Israel* to be *miraculously* cured of his *Leprosy*, as our Lord cured his Disciples by a Word of his Mouth; or thank him for Blessings in such a Manner as implies a Denial of God's being the great Governour of the World, and the original Fountain of all human Blessings; or ascribe such Perfections to him, either in *Kind*, or *Degree*, as belong only to the *Deity*; as in the Case of *Herod*, when the People, in Compliment to him for an eloquent Speech, said, it was the Voice of a *God*, and not of a *Man*. But, all *invisible Creatures*, are *naturally* incapable Objects of our *Addresses*, or *Prayers*, of any kind. I call any Being *naturally* an *incapable* Object of our *Addresses*, which is of such Nature, and in such Circumstances, that it is impossible for us to know whether it will be to *any purpose* to address ourselves to it. Let us, then, consider how this Matter stands with regard to *invisible Creatures*. In the first place, All *Creatures* being of a *limited* Nature, it is impossible for us to know whether any *invisible* Creature be *present* with us when we address ourselves to it. Archbishop *Tennison*, in his learned Treatise on *Idolatry*, observes, that the Power of God being *infinite*, we cannot know but that he may be able to create a Being that may be *every where*, as well as in any *particular* Place. Strictly speaking, this is true: But, then, with Reverence to his Grace's Character, I must observe that even *Omnipotence* can create but *one* such Being, because it seems, to *my* Apprehension, that *two* *created*

Beings cannot be in the *same Place*, at the *same Time*; whereas the Scriptures assure us that there are *Multitudes* of invisible spiritual Substances surrounding us, and frequently changing their Situation. It is the *Prerogative* of God to be able to *pervade* other Beings, or to be, at the same Time, in the very same Place, with any other Being; consequently, tho' there might, as far as we can tell, have been a *Creature* made capable of being *every where* present, yet we are assur'd, from there being *more* Creatures than *one*, that there can be no such *Creature* as an *omnipresent* one: I mention this only as a Matter of *curious Speculation*, not as a Point of *Consequence*: For, if it *were* possible in Nature, we could not possibly *know* that there *actually is* such a one, there being no such Truth *revealed* to us by God. On the contrary, the Scripture makes mention of no other *omnipresent* Being but the *Deity*, and always mentions *his* Omnipresence as *peculiar* to *Himself*. Solomon, in his Prayer of Dedication, says to God, *the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee, much less this House*. And God says of himself, *Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool*. *Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off*. The Psalmist most elegantly, as well as fully, expresses his *Immensity*, or *Omnipresence*,—“ Whither shall I go from  
“ thy Spirit, or whither shall I go from thy Pre-  
“ sence? If I ascend up into Heaven, thou art  
“ there; if I go down into Hell, thou art there  
“ also; if I take the Wings of the Morning,  
“ and remain in the uttermost Parts of the Sea,  
“ even



“ even there also shall thy Hand lead me.”

There are variety of Passages in the Scriptures of the old and new Testament to the same purpose, all of them setting forth God's *Immensity*, or *Omnipresence*. And it is necessarily implied, in the Nature of Things, that when God gives a *particular* Account of his *natural Attributes*, it must be by way of *Distinction*, and that what he says of his *own* Nature cannot be said of his *Creatures*. As to *us, Men*, we know that we are, all, *limited*, and can occupy but a small Part of Space at one Time; and, consequently, the greatest *Saint* that ever lived, after he is *dead* continues to be *as limited* as when he was *alive*, and can occupy no more Space. • As to the *Angels*, we are assured that *they* are not only *limited*, like *Men*, but perpetually *changing* their Situation; so that when the *Papists* pray to any *Saint*, or *Angel*, it is impossible for them to know whether the Being to whom they pray be at that Time *present* with them.

But, supposing we were able to tell when any particular *Saint*, or *Angel*, is *present* with us, it could not be *privy* to our *Thoughts*, and, consequently, all such *Prayers*, or *Addresses* of the Mind, could be of no manner of Signification; and that *Saints* and *Angels* cannot know our *Thoughts*, we are as certain as we are that the Scriptures are true; for, they expressly declare, that it is *God* that seeth in *Secret* and is *privy* to the *Thoughts* and *Intents* of the *Heart*. *Solomon*, in particular, says, not only that *God knoweth* our *Thoughts*, but that he *alone* is capable of

doing it, 1 *Kings* viii. 39. And God's Ability to know the *Secrets* of our *Hearts* is a necessary Inference which the Scriptures draw from his having *created* us. *Understand, ye brutish,* (says the Psalmist) *He that planted the Ear shall not be hear, he that made the Eye shall not be see?* Then it follows, *The Lord knoweth the Thoughts of Men.* The same Inference God draws from his *Omnipresence*; *Am I God at hand, and not afar off*: From whence he infers, *Can any hide himself in secret Places that I shall not see him.* And, therefore, as it is *God only* that is every where present, and privy to our Thoughts, *he only* is a capable Object of our religious Addresses. The Worship of *Saints* and *Angels* is full as senseless and ridiculous as any of the *Heathen Idolatry*. The Holy Scriptures frequently deride the Worshippers of those Deities, which wanted the Perfections necessary to render them *capable* Objects of Worship. It was a bitter Taunt to the Priests of *Baal*, when *Elijah* had them *cry aloud, for your God is either talking, or pursuing, or on a Journey, or, peradventure, he sleepeth, and must be awaked.* So when a *Papist* prays to a *Saint*, or an *Angel*, he knows not but that the Object of his Worship may at that Time be at a vast Distance from him, or, if present, as ignorant of what is said to him, as *Baal* was of the Prayers of his Worshippers; unless God has told them that he will always make known to *Saints* and *Angels*, such Addresses as are made to them by Men. But where do they find any Directions in Scripture to tell any of them to *what* Saint,

Saint, or Angel, any of them shall pray, with an Assurance that God will communicate to that Saint, or Angel, such Addressees?

But, suppose God were continually to make known to *Saints* and *Angels* the Petitions that are made to them from *Earth*, even *this* would not make them *capable Objects* of our Prayers; for, unless they be capable of *answering* Petitions, what will their knowing our Wants signify to us? And it is impossible that they *should* be able to supply all our Wants, without being *omniscient*, and *omnipotent*; without *Omniscience*, they cannot tell whether what we ask of them be *good* for us, or *how* our Wants may be supplied. Without *Omnipotence*, they cannot always be able to put their good Designs in Execution. They must be able to see all the *present* bad Designs of *evil Spirits*, and *evil Men*, against us. They must be able to *foresee* all the *future* Intentions and Actions of *free Agents*. They must likewise be able to controul and over-rule them; and, I presume, there is not a *Papist* of common Sense who believes that *Saints* and *Angels* have such Powers as these; which, yet are absolutely requisite towards making them *capable Objects* of their Prayers. How, then, can they act so absurdly, and impertinently, as to pray to Beings which they must know, and acknowledge, to be *incapable* of *helping* them? And, yet, that they do pray to *Saints* and *Angels* is undeniable. At present, indeed, their Masses are not publickly used among us; and, therefore we cannot have daily experimental

Evidence of this Fact; but, all Persons, who know any thing of *Popery*, must know that the *Papists* do publickly pray to *Saints* and *Angels* in their Churches: Nay, they have made the Doctrine of praying to *Saints* and *Angels* an Article of their *Faith*, and, in their Opinion, necessary to Salvation; and they refuse Communion with, and positively condemn, all those who will not profess their Belief of this Article of their *Trent* Creed. Nay, they not only *pray* to them, but they pray to them with all the same Circumstances of *religious Honour*, and *Worship*, with which they pray to *God* and *Christ*; and pray to *them* together with *God* and *Christ* as *joint Objects* of *Worship*: This might easily be proved from their *publick Forms* of *Prayer*; but this does not so properly fall within my present Plan; which was, to shew that *Saints*, and *Angels*, as *Creatures* of a *finite* and *limited* Nature, are not capable Objects of our *Addresses* of any sort, because they can neither know what we pray for, nor are capable of answering our Prayers. If any one is desirous of receiving farther Satisfaction on this Head, I refer him to three most excellent Sermons of Archbishop *Tillotson* upon *one God*, and *one Mediator between God and Man*, &c. in the 1st *Folio* Volume of his *posthumous Works*.

But, though *Saints* and *Angels* are not capable of *hearing*, or *answering* our Prayers, by Virtue of their *own* Knowledge and Power, yet, the *Papists* pretend that *God* may *reveal* to *Saints* and *Angels* what we ask of them, and  
enable

enable them to grant our Petitions. God, it seems, may do this if he pleases, and therefore they pray to Saints and Angels without knowing whether he will be pleased to do it, or not. Is it not more reasonable to argue after this Manner: We do not know (the Scriptures being quite silent about it) that *Saints* and *Angels* do know what we say to them, or are able to grant what we ask of them, and therefore we will not offer to pray to them, for want of a sufficient Warrant from Reason, or Scripture, because such a Practice would be a foolish one? I shall illustrate it by putting a familiar Case. Suppose that we in *England* should ask any thing of the *Emperor* of *China*, tho' it is naturally impossible for the Emperor to hear what we say to him, or be capable of assisting us, unless God reveals it to him, and enables him to grant it; I say, suppose we should pray to him only because God can do all this, when we have no Grounds of Assurance that God will do it; in this Case would any Man pretend to talk, or converse, with the Emperor at so great a Distance from us, as if he were present with us, or we were sure that he knew what we said to him, and could supply our Wants? The Parallel between this and the Case of praying to *Saints* and *Angels* is so obvious, that I need not stay to draw it: But, to obviate this Difficulty, the *Papists* have found out a very great Secret, viz. that *Saints* and *Angels*, having the *beatific Vision of God*, see all Things in him, and, consequently know when we pray to them, what we pray to them for, and whether our Prayers be fit to be offered. Now, in the first

place, as to *Saints*, we, knowing nothing of the *Hearts* of Men, cannot tell *who* are *Saints*, or who are *hypocritical Sinners*, and may pray to them under a Persuasion of their being in the more *immediate Presence* of God, while they are among the *Wicked* in *Darkness* and *Despair*; and, therefore before the *Papists* pray to any of the *Saints*, they should pray to God that he would be pleas'd to tell them whether the Person to whom they are going to pray be *really* a *Saint* in *Heaven*, or a *Sinner* in *Hell*: Besides, the *Scripture* is silent about this Glass, in which the *Saints* see all things. And, if this be the Case, we need not go so far about, but may better go directly to the Throne of Grace, according to the Direction of *Scripture*, and ask for what we want, with a firm Reliance on *Christ's* Promise, that whatever we ask *in his Name* will be granted, provided it be fit for us, and we worthy of it.

Before I shut up this Head, concerning the *proper Object* of our Prayers, I must observe, that our Blessed *Saviour*, the *Man Christ Jesus*, tho' a *Creature* of a *limited Nature*, and now resident in Heaven, is a *capable Object* of our Prayers, because he is *God*, as well as *Man*. As the *reasonable Soul and Body* are *one Man*, so *God and Man* are *ONE CHRIST*: And, by Virtue of this Union of the *divine* and *human Nature* in his Person, he has all those essential Perfections which make him a *capable Object* of Prayer; such as *Omnipresence*, *Omniscience*, and *Omnipotence*; but, if he were a *mere Creature*, he would be as *incapable* an Object of Prayer.

Prayer as any *other invisible* Creature, because he could be no more capable of *bearing*, or *answering*, our Prayers, than *Saints* and *Angels* are; without a *particular Revelation*, and a *supernatural Assistance*, from *God*, of which the Scripture says not a Syllable: And, yet, the Scriptures plainly represent *CHRIST* as the *Object* of *Prayer*, and relate the Prayers that the *Saints* offered to him. Thus, *Acts* vii. 59, 60. *They stoned Stephen* calling upon *God*, and saying, *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit*; and he kneeled down, and cried with a loud Voice, *Lord lay not this Sin to their Charge*. In these Words *St. Stephen* is expressly said to pray unto *Jesus Christ*; consequently, in the Opinion of that *inspired Martyr*, *Jesus Christ* is the *Object* of *Prayer*, and *truly God*. As from his *Divinity* we can prove him to be a *capable Object* of our *Prayers*, so we may argue, *backward*, from his being a *capable Object* of our *Prayers*, to his being *God*; and if he be *God*, he must be the *one God*, since the Scriptures know of no *other God*, but the *one supreme God*; and of no other *Worship*, but what is due to the *one supreme God*. A *subordinate Worship*, to a *subordinate God*, to a *CREATURE God*, is a *Doctrine of modern Invention*. A *CREATURE God*, an omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent *Creature*, is the *strangest Creature* that ever was heard of, as great a *Stranger* to *common Sense*, as it is to the *Bible*, and a much *greater Mystery* than the *Doctrine of the Trinity*.

So plain a Case as this is needs no *Authority* to confirm it, but I shall cite a *Passage* in the  
 Sermons,

Sermons, above mentioned, of Archbishop *Tillotson*, not only as it is a Vindication of what I have advanced; but as it is a Vindication of that excellent Man from the Charge of *Arianism*, after his having publish'd four Sermons professedly in proof of *Christ's Divinity*. The Passage is at p. 135. "If *Christ* be only a *Man*, how can he be present every where, to those that call upon him; since this is not the Nature of *Man*, but *God*, to be able to be present every where? If *Christ* be only a *Man*, why do we call upon him as *Mediator*; since Prayer to a *Man* is deemed ineffectual to save us? If *Christ* be only a *Man*, why do we put our Hope in him; since Hope in *Man* is accursed in Scripture?" At p. 140, there is another Passage, that, by necessary Inference, proves *Christ's Divinity*: "Praying to them (*Saints and Angels*) in all Places, and at all Times, and for all sorts of Blessings, does suppose them to have the incommunicable Perfections of the divine Nature imparted to them, or inherent in them, *viz.* his *Omnipresence*, *Omniscience*, and *Omnipotence*; and to whatever Being we ascribe these Perfections, in doing so, we make it *God*." We, therefore, being commanded to pray to *Christ* in all Places, and at all Times, and for all sorts of Blessings, this is a plain Declaration of his *truly divine* Nature: And it is for want of these *divine* Perfections that *St. Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Colossians*, absolutely *forbids* praying to *Angels*; and if not to *Angels*, much less to *Saints*.



I hope, I have made it plain that *God ONLY*, the *one supreme God*, is a *capable Object* of Prayer, because *he ONLY* is *omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent*; but it does not follow, that, because he is *capable*, at all Times, and in all Places, to hear, and answer all the Prayers of all his Creatures, therefore he *permits*, much less *requires*, us, to pray to him, since he knows, without our telling him, all our Wants, and is disposed, by his Goodness, to supply them, as far as is consistent with his Wisdom, without our asking him. His *Will* in this Case cannot be proved by his *bare Capacity* to be prayed to, but must be grounded upon some other Consideration, drawn either from *our Nature*, or his *express Command*. Next, therefore, I proceed to enquire *how* we can discover it to be the *Will* of *God* that we *should* pray to him.

#### C H A P IV.

##### *Concerning our Obligations to the Duty of Prayer.*

I say, the Proof of our Obligation to pray to *God Reason* must deduce from *his Nature*, and *ours*; or be built upon his *express Command*, contained in some *external Revelation*. As for what relates to the Proof of the Duty from the *Nature of God*, the *Nature of Man*, and the *Nature of the Duty*, I cannot state that Matter in a clearer Light, than in the following Letters that passed on this Occasion, between a very learned and ingenious Divine, the late Mr.

Joseph Clarke of Long-Ditton, and myself, and therefore I shall here publish them.

To the Reverend Mr. JOSEPH CLARKE.

Sir,

AS you are justly allow'd to have an excellent metaphysical Genius, and very minutely to have consider'd the *Nature, Relation,* and *Fitness* of Things, with the *moral Obligations* arising from them, I should be much oblig'd to you, and our learned Friend Mr. *Harvest*, for your Sentiments upon a Subject of Consequence, that I would examine with all possible Accuracy. I want a Proof of the Duty of *Prayer* from *natural* Principles. I have read a good deal upon the Subject, and must be of Opinion that very eminent Writers have us'd very inconclusive Arguments, which in the Consequence must always do more hurt than good. It has ever been an establish'd Maxim with me, that *Truth* can never be serv'd by *Error*, neither can it ever stand in need of such *false* Friends to support it. They always give an Advantage to the Enemy, by bringing a Discredit upon the Cause which they attempt to serve. Whenever the *Inconclusiveness* of such Arguments are detected and expos'd (and there will always be *Infidels* able and ready to do it) it staggers weak Minds, and brings a *Distrust* upon the *clearest* Arguments, which will either hinder a fair Examination, or give a wrong Bias to the Judgment, and occasion them to imagine that a thing is not capable of  
being

being proved at all, because *those* Arguments do  
 not prove it. The Thing to be prov'd is this,  
*viz.* That *Prayer* is a Duty, not only as it is a  
*natural Means* of *Religion* and *Virtue*, (which  
 I think capable of Demonstration) but in *it-*  
*self*, and for *its own* sake; a Duty arising  
 from the *Nature* of *Man*, and of the *Deity*;  
 from *us*, as *dependent* sinful Beings, to *him*, as  
 the *Creator*, *Preserver* and *Judge* of the *World*.  
 This, I say, is the Point to be prov'd: This  
 is what eminent Men have publickly attempted  
 to prove, but not to *my* Satisfaction, nor the  
 Conviction of *Infidels*. If any Body can do it,  
*you* and *he* can; and by doing of it you may  
 not only gratify the Curiosity of an old, inqui-  
 sitive Friend, but do publick Service to Reli-  
 gion and to Mankind. I am,

*Your affectionate Friend and Servant,*

W. WEBSTER.

*To the Reverend Dr. WEBSTER.*

*Sir,*

I should have answer'd the Favour of yours,  
 which now lies before me of *Octob. 21*,  
 by the Time you desired; but was prevented,  
 by being obliged to be absent from home,  
 till Yesterday; therefore hope you will excuse  
 the Neglect. I cannot presume to think myself  
 able to give you the Satisfaction you desire, in  
 a Matter which others, so much better quali-  
 fied,

' fied, have not succeeded in ; and, what is more ;  
 ' a Matter wherein you seem to distrust yourself ;  
 ' who (without a Compliment) I think capable  
 ' of doing as much upon all Subjects, as any  
 ' one ; but yet I cannot dispense with myself ;  
 ' from venturing to give you my Thoughts upon  
 ' the Question you propose ; that I may not,  
 ' by a Refusal, render myself unworthy of the  
 ' Honour you do me, in thinking them worth  
 ' your knowing ; though I should perhaps better  
 ' consult my own Advantage, by being silent.

' The Thing you want to see proved is, if  
 ' I mistake not, contain'd in the following Pro-  
 ' position, *viz.*

' The Act of Prayer, either for *Spirituals*, or  
 ' *Temporals*, from Man to the supreme Being, 'is  
 ' a *Duty of natural Morality* ; or the *Obligation*  
 ' to which, is *founded in*, and *will arise simply*  
 ' *from*, the *natural Relation and Fitness of Things*.

' What has occur'd to me in thinking upon  
 ' it, is as follows :

' *That Act*, to which Man, *simply*, as a *ra-*  
 ' *tional Agent*, is *obliged from the natural Rela-*  
 ' *tion and Fitness of Things* ; will be to him a  
 ' *Duty, founded in*, and *arising simply from*, such  
 ' *Relation and Fitness*.

' I know it is always urged by those who are  
 ' against the Scheme of *Obligation from Fitness*,  
 ' &c. that there can be no *Obligation* without a  
 ' *Law* ; and no *Law* without *Sanctions* annex'd.  
 ' This I have always looked upon as a most pi-  
 ' tiful Logomachy ; as if the *Law of Reason*,  
 ' were not as much a *Law*, to *rational Agents*,

' as

as any Law whatever ; or as if the *Reason of*  
*Things* were not a *Law*, because, forsooth, it  
 is consider'd as having, as such, no *Sanctions*  
 annex'd : But surely such *Sanctions* do not  
 make any thing more a *Law*, than it would  
 be without them. They may be useful, or  
 necessary, to enforce the *Law*, and to procure  
 a more regular *Obedience* to it ; but where the  
*Law* is founded in *Reason*, it wants no other  
*Sanctions* to make it a *Law*, or *obligatory*, to  
 all *rational Agents* : It is so in itself, and as  
 such ; and the *Sanctions* annex'd, are only *ex-*  
*trinsic Appendages*, and enter not necessarily into  
 the Idea of a *rational Law*, or its *Obligation* as  
 such : And whoever will say, that *Sanctions*  
 annex'd, are what only make *Morality obligat-*  
*ory* upon a *moral Agent*, may as well say, that  
 the *Sanctions* make it *Morality* ; for surely, there  
 is not more Difficulty in conceiving a *moral Law*  
*obligatory* without *Sanctions*, than in conceiving  
*Morality* without *Obligation*.—But this by the  
 way—They who do not like the Word *Law*,  
 may change it, without any Detriment to the  
 Question : For call it a *Rule of Action* ; and  
 then I apprehend that a *rational Agent*, is as  
 much obliged, as such, *i. e. morally obliged*, to  
 act by the *Rule of Reason*, that is, to act as a  
*rational Agent*, or as what he is, as if it were  
 a *Law*, guarded by a thousand *Sanctions*.

Man then, being a *rational Agent*, is, sim-  
 ply, and as such, *morally obliged* to act by the  
*Law*, or *Rule of natural Reason* ; and what-  
 ever he is so obliged to, is thereby his *Duty*,  
 founded

‘ *founded in, and arising from, the natural Re-*  
 ‘ *lation and Fitness of Things; which is that*  
 ‘ *Rule or Law.*

‘ The present Question then is, whether the  
 ‘ *Act of Prayer*, from Man to the supreme Being,  
 ‘ be an Act to which he is, *simply, as a rational*  
 ‘ *Agent, obliged from the natural Relation and*  
 ‘ *Fitness of Things.*

‘ Now, Man is a Being *sensible* of the many  
 ‘ and various *Wants* and *Necessities*, whether  
 ‘ *Temporal, or Spiritual*, to which he is by his  
 ‘ *Nature liable*. He is *dependent* upon the su-  
 ‘ preme Being, as his Creator and Preserver, for  
 ‘ the *Supply of such Wants*; and in whose *Power*  
 ‘ and *Will alone* it is to grant, or not to grant,  
 ‘ such Supplies.—Will it now from hence fol-  
 ‘ low, that Man, as a *sensible, dependent, rational*  
 ‘ *Agent*, is *oblig'd*, as such, simply, and from  
 ‘ the *natural Relation and Fitness of Things*, to  
 ‘ *apply* to that Being, in whose *Power and Will*  
 ‘ alone it is to grant such Supplies? Does there  
 ‘ not seem to be as *natural a Connexion, Relation,*  
 ‘ and *Fitness*, between *Want, Dependence, &c.*  
 ‘ and *Application* to him on whom *that Depen-*  
 ‘ *dence is*, and in whose *Power and Will* the  
 ‘ *Supply of such Wants are*; as there is between  
 ‘ any moral *Fitnesses* whatever?—I don't mean  
 ‘ a *Fitness of Means to an End* merely, but a *Fit-*  
 ‘ *ness of Congruity*, a *Fitness in se*, arising from  
 ‘ the *natural Relation* between God and Man.

‘ May it not be farther argued, that Man,  
 ‘ being a Creature thus *dependent*; all such Ac-  
 ‘ tions, *Conduct* and *Behaviour*, which are *ex-*  
 ‘ *pressive*

' *pressive* of an *Acknowledgement* of such *Depen-*  
 ' *dence*, are, as a rational dependent Agent,  
 ' Parts of his *moral Duty*, arising simply from  
 ' the natural *Relation* and *Fitness* of Things? Is  
 ' there not a *natural Fitness* of *Action*, between  
 ' such a *dependent State*, and the *Acknowledgment*  
 ' of it? *i. e.* Is not such a dependent, rational  
 ' Agent, *obliged*, simply, as such, by the *Rule*  
 ' of *Reason*, that is, by the *Rule of Fitness*, to  
 ' *acknowledge* himself to be, by his Conduct and  
 ' Behaviour, *what he is*; and would not a contrary  
 ' Conduct be acting *counter* to the *natural Rela-*  
 ' *tion*, which such a dependent, rational Agent  
 ' bears to him, on whom he is so dependent?  
 ' Is not the *Act of Prayer* therefore, or such  
 ' an Act of Application, (being one of the  
 ' strongest *Means* of such *Acknowledgment*, as  
 ' is before mention'd) an Action whose *simple*  
 ' *Fitness* is founded in the Nature and Reason  
 ' of Things? And, if so, does it not become, as  
 ' such, a *Duty*, and *obligatory*, a Part of the  
 ' *moral Law*, or *Religion of Nature*? and there-  
 ' fore farther, a Part of Conduct which may be  
 ' *inquired* into by the *supreme Judge*; to whom  
 ' Man is *accountable*.—But observe here, that I  
 ' do not make the *Obligation* to arise from his  
 ' being thus *accountable*; but from his being a  
 ' *sensible, dependent, rational Agent*: But since  
 ' he is *also* an *accountable Agent*, he may be  
 ' called to account for his Conduct in this, as  
 ' well as any other Part of the moral Law.

' Farther still, May not the like be said of an  
 ' *Obligation* of Man, consider'd as a *sinful of-*  
 ' *fending*,

' *ending, accountable Agent, to apply for Pardon*  
 ' to that supreme Judge, on whose *Will* and  
 ' *Power* alone such *Pardon depends*? Is there  
 ' not, as before, a *Fitness of Congruity* in such  
 ' Conduct, arising from his *Nature* and *Circum-*  
 ' *stances*, and the *Relation* he bears to God? *i. e.*  
 ' would such a Creature act *as such*, if he did  
 ' otherwise; and therefore is not a *moral Obli-*  
 ' *gation* thereby induced?

' The Case then being thus, is not Man, as  
 ' a *rational Agent*, morally *obliged* to act accord-  
 ' ing to these *moral Relations* and *Fitnesses*?  
 ' Would he behave *as* a rational Agent, if he  
 ' did not act according to them? If not, then  
 ' by *being such*, he is *morally obliged* to act *as*  
 ' *such*, *i. e.* he is *morally obliged* to act *as what*  
 ' *he is*; since otherwise, he could not *be*, what  
 ' by Supposition he *is*; for *being such*, is *acting*  
 ' *as such*; they are the same Thing. This is  
 ' what I mean by *moral Obligation*; which is  
 ' as much *Obligation* as can be induced by any  
 ' *Sanctions* whatever: All this I know is strange  
 ' Language to those who cannot see that the  
 ' *Obligation*, arising from the *Nature* and *Reason*  
 ' of Things, carries its own *Sanction* along with  
 ' it, from the universal Confusion, naturally con-  
 ' sequent upon *counteracting* them; which, to a  
 ' rational Agent, ought to be, (though in fact it  
 ' prove otherwise) as strong a *Sanction* as any  
 ' Rewards and Punishments superadded; and  
 ' they who deny this to be *Obligation*, seem to  
 ' have no Notion of any *Obligation* but *external*,  
 ' and *coercive*, or that a Man cannot be said to be  
 ' bound



bound in any other Sense than that of being tied  
Neck and Heels.

But it may be said, perhaps, that the supreme  
Being, having at once, and eternally, one  
determin'd Scheme of Providence, viz. of al-  
ways, and invariably doing what is right and  
fit to be done in all Cases; and knowing exter-  
nally, and at once, all our Wants, and what is  
right and fit to be done; and consequently  
what, in all Cases, will certainly and invaria-  
bly be done; the Act of Prayer may appear,  
in the Nature and Reason of Things, to be  
improper, and unfit; as it is supposing, either  
that God may be prevailed upon by it, to do  
what is not right and fit to be done; or else  
that he would not do what is right and fit to  
be done, without it—Also to be uselefs and  
unnecessary; since it cannot be supposed that  
he will (or can, morally speaking) alter this  
one eternal Scheme of Providence, fix'd ac-  
cording to the Standard of Rectitude, on ac-  
count of such Application as is supposed; that  
it may be also unwise (and therefore unfit) as  
our Ignorance of the whole Scheme of Provi-  
dence may occasion us to ask Things unfit  
and improper, and which, however partially  
good for us, may upon the whole be not so—  
and the Act of Prayer be thus, in the Nature  
and Reason of Things, uselefs, unnecessary, un-  
fit, and unwise; then, not obligatory, or a  
Duty; but the contrary of which will be so;  
and, Thy Will be done, as it is the shortest, so  
it may be thought, perhaps, to be also the  
wisest, and most religious Address.

Whether there be, or be not, any Force in  
 such Objections, *upon the foot of natural Reason*, you will consider; or whether they may  
 be *answer'd* by saying, that an *Obligation* to  
 such Application, does not *exclude* a Defe-  
 rence, and Submission at the same time to  
 God's Will.—That the asking, thro' Igno-  
 rance, Things improper, does not take from  
 the *Obligation* of such Application *in general*.  
 —And tho' God be supposed to have one  
 invariable, *determined Scheme* of Providence,  
 which is not to be *alter'd* on account of *human*  
*Application*; yet it will not follow that such  
 Application is uselefs, unnecessary, or unfit;  
 because, *such Application*, appearing *à priori*  
 to be *in itself* a *fit Action*, from the *natural*  
*Relation* and *Fitness* of Things, as before ex-  
 plain'd; may it not be supposed that *such*  
*Action*, and *Conduct*, on *Man's side*, may  
 make a *necessary Part* of that *Scheme* of Pro-  
 vidence; so as to be a *Qualification* on the  
*Part* of *Man*, *whereby* that *Scheme* is to be  
 perform'd? i. e. tho' God will always and in-  
 variably do, *what is right and fit to be done* in  
 all Cases; and *eternally knew* what always  
 would be so; and consequently was, in the  
 Nature of Things, *certain* and *fixt*, yet that  
*eternal Fitness* and *Certainty* in the *Scheme* of  
 Providence, may depend on *Man's Performance*  
 on *his Part*, in the *Act* of *Application*, as a  
*fit Action*, arising from our *Relation* to him;  
 as a *natural Acknowledgment* of our *Depen-*  
*dence*; or as a *necessary Qualification*, and  
 Means

‘ *Means of Conveyance*; essential to, and so mak-  
 ‘ *ing a Part* in, the *one invariable Scheme*;  
 ‘ being thus *connected with*, and being one *Link*  
 ‘ in the great *Chain of Providence*, just as the  
 ‘ *eternal Certainty of Events* (which is true of all  
 ‘ Events) does not interfere with the *Obligation*  
 ‘ of Man, to do *what is right and fit*, to pro-  
 ‘ duce such Events as *future Contingences*; such  
 ‘ Means being, on the contrary, in the Scheme  
 ‘ of Providence, *necessarily or essentially connected*  
 ‘ with that *Certainty of Events*.

‘ I know not whether I have expressed my-  
 ‘ self clearly, or whether what I have troubled  
 ‘ you with comes up to what you enquire after,  
 ‘ either as to the *Question* you intend, or the  
 ‘ *Proof* of it.—I pretend only to give a *few*  
 ‘ *Hints*, which, if they meet with your Appro-  
 ‘ bation, you will improve; if otherwise, you  
 ‘ will however find at least one *natural Fitness*  
 ‘ in them; and whatever *other Obligation* they  
 ‘ may fall short of proving, they will not, I  
 ‘ hope fail of proving *that* which I think my-  
 ‘ self under, of always being at your Com-  
 ‘ mand, and, dear Sir,

“ *Your faithful and obedient Servant,*

Long-Ditton,  
 Nov. 12. 1748.

JO. CLARKE.

‘ P. S. The *Question* you propose is attended  
 ‘ with *Difficulties*; and I must confess,  
 ‘ that, upon looking this Letter over again,  
 ‘ I do not think it comes up to so clear a  
 ‘ *Proof* as I could wish, but believe it  
 ‘ may be improved.”

Sir,

IN answer to the Favour of your's, concern-  
 ing the *natural Fitness*, and *moral Obliga-*  
*tion*, of the Duty of *Prayer*, I shall join Issue  
 with you in Opinion that a *moral Obligation*  
 may arise from the *Fitness of Things*, where  
 there is no *external* Sanction to enforce it. *Rea-*  
*son*, no doubt, is an eternal and immutable  
*Law*, or *Rule* of Action, to all *reasonable*  
 Beings, or, else the *Deity* could have no *Law*,  
 or *Rule* of Action that is binding upon his *mo-*  
*ral Perfections*, and we could not *reason* from  
 them in Proof of the Truth of Religion.  
 And, if *God* be under a *moral Obligation* to  
 make the *Fitness of Things*, i. e. *Reason*, the  
 Rule of his Conduct, all *intelligent* Creatures  
 must be under the same *Obligation* to act *rea-*  
*sonably*, tho' not under the same *Necessity*, for  
 want of his *absolute Perfection*: But, then, as  
 we are not, like the *Deity*, *self-sufficient*, and  
 yet, as Beings capable of *Happiness*, or *Misery*,  
 cannot avoid acting with a View to our *own*  
*Happiness*, upon the *whole*; if you take away  
 the *External Sanctions* of Religion — a *future*  
*State of Rewards* and *Punishments* — in many  
 Cases the *natural Fitness* or *Reason* of Things  
 would be *alter'd* with regard to *particular*  
*Persons*, under *particular Circumstances*; and,  
 consequently, in all those Cases all *moral Ob-*  
*ligation* must cease, *unless* intelligent, conscious  
 Beings could be *morally obliged*, knowingly,  
 to make themselves *Miserable*, which I ap-  
 prehend

comprehend to be as contrary to *Reason*, and the  
*Fitness of Things*, as can possibly be conceived.  
 I need not give Examples, they being so va-  
 rious and obvious in common Life: But, let  
 us come to the Question, and, in order to it,  
 I must transcribe *my* State of it, as you had it  
 in my first Letter.

The Thing to be Proved is this, *viz.* “ That  
 Prayer is a Duty, not only as a *natural Means*  
 of *Religion* and *Virtue*, but in *itself*, and for  
 its *own* sake; a Duty arising from the *Nature*  
 of *Man*, and the *Nature of God*; from *us*,  
 as *dependent, sinful* Creatures, to *him*, as our  
*Creator, Preserver, and Judge*; to which let  
 me add, farther, by way of Explanation,  
 without any regard to its Influence upon *our-*  
*selves, or other Men.*

In your Answer to my Letter you state my  
 Question thus: “ The Thing which you want  
 to see prov'd, is contained in the following  
 Proposition, *viz.* that the Act of *Prayer*,  
 from *Man* to the *supreme* Being, is a Duty of  
*natural Morality*; or a Duty, the Obligation  
 to which is founded in, and will arise, SIM-  
 PLY, from the *natural Relation*, and *Fitness*  
 of *Things.*”—In another Part of your Letter  
 it is stated thus—“ The present Question is,  
 Whether the Act of *Prayer*, from *Man* to the  
*supreme* Being, be an Act to which he is  
*simply*, as a *rational* Creature, obliged from  
 the *natural Relation* and *Fitness of Things*?”

Tho' the Observation has not an *immediate*  
 Connection with our main Question, it may,  
 D 4 however,

however, be of some Use to observe, by the way, that the Phrase, *natural Religion*, which you here use, is of an *ambiguous* Signification: For, when we say that any Thing is a Duty of *natural Religion*, we may mean that the *natural Understanding* of Man, *unassisted* by any *external Revelation*, might have discovered our Obligation to the Performance of it. In this Sense of the Words, I must be of Opinion that there is no such Thing as *natural Religion*; and that if Men had been left, *solely*, to the Guidance of their *unassisted* Reason, there never *would*, or *could*, have been any Religion at all: —But, if you mean no more by *natural Religion* than this, *viz.* that the *natural Understanding* of Man, inlightened and strengthen'd by *external Communications*, and Assistances from the Author of it, gradually improv'd this *natural Faculty* by Exercise; by which means Men, in time, became capable, in great measure, of discovering the *natural Fitness* of the *moral Duties* of Religion, from the *Relation of Things*; I say, if no more than this be meant, I subscribe to it, and think it as clear as any one Truth in *Morality*, that *Prayer*, in this Sense of *natural Religion*, is one of its prime Duties, as having, in the Exercise of it, a *natural Fitness*, or *Tendency*, to promote *Religion* and *Virtue*, by means of its Influence upon the Minds and Conduct of Men, which, I think, must be sufficient to convince you that you have not *rightly* stated *my Question*, in those Passages which I have cited from your

Letter,

Letter; because, it never was a *Question* with  
 me, whether *Prayer* be a Duty of *natural Mo-*  
*rality*?—Whether an Obligation to the Per-  
 formance of it, will not arise from the *natural*  
*Relation* and *Fitness of Things*?—Whether we  
 be obliged, from such a Relation and Fitness,  
 as *rational* Creatures, to perform it?—If the  
 Duty be, what I readily *acknowledge* it to be,  
 in *itself*, a *natural Means* of promoting *Reli-*  
*gion* and *Virtue*; thence necessarily follows its  
*natural Morality*, its *natural Fitness*, and its  
*natural Obligation* upon us, as *rational* Crea-  
 tures. Thus far, my good Friend, you and  
 I are at a perfect Agreement;—But, now, we  
 must differ; not a little, but widely;—For,  
 in a another Part of your Letter, you *wave*  
 the Consideration of its *natural Fitness*, as a  
*Means* of Religion and Virtue, and state the  
 Question exactly as I have done, but have not,  
 as I conceive, prov'd the Point in Question.  
 —You there say you will not consider the *na-*  
*tural Fitness* of Prayer, as a *Means* to an *End*,  
 but as having in it a *Fitness* of CONGRUITY,  
 arising from the *natural Relation* between God  
 and *Man*, or, (as I express'd it) between us  
*dependent*, and *sinful* Creatures, and God the  
 Creator and Judge; affirming, that it is *fit* and  
*congruous* that we should *acknowledge* to Him,  
 our *Dependency* and *Sinfulness*; and that, with-  
 out making such an Acknowledgment, we  
 should not act as it *naturally* becomes Beings  
 to do, who stand in such a Relation. This is  
 the Thing that I wanted, and do still want,

' to see prov'd.—But, good Sir, I must first  
 ' take the Liberty (I wish you may not think  
 ' that I take *too much* Liberty) to deny your  
 ' *Distinction* between a *Fitness* of *Means* to an  
 ' *End*, and a *Fitness* of *Congruity*, they being,  
 ' according to my Apprehension, synonymous  
 ' Terms. Whatever has a *Fitness* in it as a  
 ' *Means* to an *End*, must, likewise, have a *Fit-*  
 ' *ness* of *Congruity* : For, pray Sir, consider, at-  
 ' tentively, what you mean by *Congruity* : If  
 ' you mean *any* thing, certainly you *must* mean  
 ' an *Aptness*, or *Suitableness*, in such an Action,  
 ' to *answer* such a *Purpose*, or to *produce* such an  
 ' *Effect*. If there be a *Congruity* (for Instance)  
 ' between a State of *Dependence* upon the *su-*  
 ' *preme* Being, and an *Acknowledgement*, to *Him*,  
 ' of that Dependence, it must be for some *Rea-*  
 ' *son* that it is *fit* for us so to behave. Now,  
 ' what is this *Reason*, which constitutes the *Fit-*  
 ' *ness* of *Congruity* in this Case? It can be  
 ' nothing different from the *End*, or *Design*, in-  
 ' tended to be answer'd by such an Action; they  
 ' are the same Thing. This *Reason*, then, or  
 ' *End*, for which the Action ought to be per-  
 ' form'd, must relate to *God*, or to *us*; that is,  
 ' if it be *fit* and *congruous* that *dependent Crea-*  
 ' *tures* should acknowledge such their *Depen-*  
 ' *dency*, to *Him*, on whom they depend, it  
 ' must be for one of these *Reasons*, i. e. for one  
 ' of these *Ends*, or *Purposes*, either, that *we*  
 ' may be benefited, or that *God* may receive  
 ' some Advantage, or Pleasure, from our De-  
 ' votions, *simply* consider'd. Your Argument  
 ' *excludes*



‘ *excludes* all Regard to the Influence that Prayer  
 ‘ may have upon *us*, or any Good that it may  
 ‘ do *us* ; and, consequently, in this way of Rea-  
 ‘ soning, from our *Relation* to *God*, *simply* con-  
 ‘ sidered, whatever *Fitness* there is in it, what-  
 ‘ ever good *End* can be answer’d by this Act,  
 ‘ it must *wholly* respect *him* to whom we pray ;  
 ‘ and if it respects *God* (which the present Ar-  
 ‘ gument supposes) he must be some way, or  
 ‘ other, *benefited* by it ; which, in my Opi-  
 ‘ nion, is a most *blasphemous* Supposition. The  
 ‘ Thing appears to me in so very clear and  
 ‘ strong a Light, that it requires no Authorities  
 ‘ to support it ; but I shall call in three great  
 ‘ Writers to my Assistance. The great and  
 ‘ good *Dr. Scott*, in his *Christian Life*, Vol. I.  
 ‘ p. 4. Expresses himself thus, “ God’s essential  
 ‘ “ Glory is so immense and secure, that we can  
 ‘ “ do nothing to encrease, or diminish it ; and no  
 ‘ “ other Glory can redound to him from with-  
 ‘ “ out, but what is the Reflection of his own  
 ‘ “ natural Rays. He understands himself too  
 ‘ “ well to value himself either more, or less, for  
 ‘ “ the Praises, or Dispraises of his Creatures. He  
 ‘ “ is enough of Stage and Theatre to himself,  
 ‘ “ and hath the same satisfying Prospect of his  
 ‘ “ own Glory in the midst of all the loud Blas-  
 ‘ “ phemies of Hell, as among the perpetual Hal-  
 ‘ “ lelujahs of Heaven. And, having so, it can-  
 ‘ “ not be supposed that he should enjoin us to  
 ‘ “ praise and glorify him for the sake of any  
 ‘ “ Good, or *Advantage*, that may accrue to him-  
 ‘ “ self by it, or out of any other Pleasure that  
 ‘ “ he

“ he takes in hearing himself applauded by us,  
 “ than in any other Act that is reasonable in  
 “ its own Nature; but it is *therefore* he will  
 “ have us praise him because he knows that it  
 “ is for our Good, and highly conduces, as it  
 “ is a most *reasonable* Action, to the Perfection  
 “ and Happiness of our reasonable Natures; be-  
 “ cause our *praising* him naturally excites us to  
 “ imitate him, and to transcribe into *our own*  
 “ Natures those adorable Perfections which we  
 “ do admire and extol in his.—‘ Archbishop  
 “ *Tillotson* shall be my next Voucher—Speaking  
 “ of the goodness of God, p. 681, he says, “ It  
 “ is great Condescension and Goodness in God to  
 “ *accept* of our Acknowledgements of his Be-  
 “ nefits, of our imperfect Praises, and ignorant  
 “ Admiration of him; and were he not as won-  
 “ derfully good, as he is great and glorious, he  
 “ would not suffer us to sully his great and glo-  
 “ rious Name, by taking it into our Mouths.—  
 “ The other is Dr. *Clagget*, on the Lord’s Prayer,  
 “ the Introduction to it, where he says, “ God  
 “ is so infinitely above us that it seemeth to look  
 “ like Arrogance and Pride for us, so much as  
 “ to presume to speak to him.” ‘ And this seems  
 “ to hold still stronger, when we consider our-  
 “ selves as *Sinners*. Our *natural Imperfections*,  
 “ when compared with the infinitely glorious  
 “ and perfect God, throw us at such an im-  
 “ mense Distance from him, as cannot avoid  
 “ striking us with such an awful Reverence as  
 “ may make us fearful of approaching him; but,  
 “ when we consider ourselves as *Rebels*, as hav-  
 “ ing

ing offended against so much Goodness, and  
 provok'd so much Power, instead of thinking  
 it *fit* and *congruous*, from this our *dreadful*  
*Relation* to him, to appear before him, it would  
 more naturally overwhelm our guilty Minds  
 with Confusion and Terror, that, like *Adam*  
 and *Eve* in *Paradise*, we should chuse, rather,  
 to hide ourselves from his Presence. To which  
 purpose I shall quote another very pertinent  
 Passage from Dr. *Scot*, p. 204. "Next to *ba-*  
*nishing* us from his Presence *for ever*, the  
 most effectual Course that God could take to  
*abase* us, was to exclude us from all *immediate*  
 Intercourse with him, and not to admit of  
 any Addresses, or Supplications from us, but  
 only thro' the Hands of a *Mediator*; which  
 is a plain Demonstration how infinitely *pure*  
 he is, and how *base* and *vile* our Sins have  
 render'd us; insomuch, that he will not suffer  
 a *Sinner* to come near him, but by a *Proxy*;  
 that he will not accept of a *Service* from a  
 guilty Hand, nor listen to a Prayer from a sin-  
 ful Mouth, 'till it is first *hallowed* and *presented*  
 to him by a *pure* and *holy* Mediator." "It is  
 not only justifiable, but commendable, in us,  
 to enquire into the Reasonableness and great  
 Usefulness of the Duty of Prayer, in exciting,  
 and improving, and propagating proper Senti-  
 ments and Dispositions. This may help to  
 recommend the Practice of it, and make us  
 the more constant and earnest in such holy  
 Exercises. But, our principal Care must be  
 to possess our Minds with the strongest Sense

‘ of our infinite Obligations to *Revelation*, which,  
 ‘ alone, can encourage us to draw near to God,  
 ‘ in full Assurance of Faith, that our Addresses  
 ‘ to the Throne of Grace, tho’ made by such  
 ‘ mean, and worthless, *less than worthless*, the  
 ‘ *most unworthy* Creatures, to a Being infinite in  
 ‘ Goodness, in Purity, in Wisdom, in Justice,  
 ‘ and Power, shall be graciously accepted and  
 ‘ answer’d, if offer’d with a sincere Heart. We  
 ‘ are *here* assured that *our Demerit*, and the *Im-*  
 ‘ *perfection* of our *Prayers*, shall be amply suppli-  
 ‘ ed by the all-sufficient Merits of *Christ’s* Death;  
 ‘ who, in virtue of his *meritorious* Passion, is  
 ‘ appointed our *Intercessor* in Heaven, and con-  
 ‘ stantly resides there, at his Father’s right Hand,  
 ‘ to recommend our Devotions to his Accept-  
 ‘ ance. We *Christians*, not only approach  
 ‘ God as our *Creator*, our *heavenly King*, and  
 ‘ *Judge*, (Ideas that carry Awfulness and Ter-  
 ‘ ror, that serve to intimidate and discourage us)  
 ‘ but, in right of our *Adoption*, we go to God  
 ‘ with Cheerfulness and Boldness, crying *Abba*,  
 ‘ *Father*; a Title of *Indearment*, that carries in  
 ‘ it Tenderness and Affection, and an Assurance  
 ‘ that, as an *earthly* Parent pitieth his Children,  
 ‘ so will our *heavenly* Father be compassionate,  
 ‘ indulgent, and condescending to *us*, tho’ his  
 ‘ undutiful Children; if we ask Forgiveness  
 ‘ with Hearts sincerely penitent. We have,  
 ‘ moreover, for *our* Encouragement to pray to  
 ‘ God, a Series of *Examples*, from the Beginning  
 ‘ of the World, thro’ the History of the old  
 ‘ and new Testament, of Men of like Passions,  
 ‘ and

‘ and Infirmities with ourselves, offering up their  
 ‘ Prayers to God, and of the Acceptableness and  
 ‘ Efficacy of them.

‘ With my repeated Thanks for your very  
 ‘ sensible and ingenious Letter, and Compli-  
 ‘ ments to the Doctor, I am,

*Your affectionate Friend and Servant,*

W. WEBSTER.

‘ P. S. Upon a Review of my Letter, I find, I  
 ‘ have conceded a thing to you which you  
 ‘ have not proved, and is not true in the Sense  
 ‘ in which you have asserted it, and upon the  
 ‘ Strength of the Argument as you, and I,  
 ‘ both, have stated and enforced it.—*Prayer*,  
 ‘ we assert to be a *natural Means* of pro-  
 ‘ moting *Religion and Virtue*; and this ap-  
 ‘ pears to be a very clear Truth.—From  
 ‘ hence we deduce its *natural Obligation* upon  
 ‘ us, as *rational Creatures*, nothing being  
 ‘ clearer to our *natural Reason* than that it  
 ‘ must be the Will of the supreme Being,  
 ‘ that *Religion and Virtue* should be promoted  
 ‘ among us, his rational Creatures, in the  
 ‘ most effectual Manner that may be. But,  
 ‘ ’till we have proved that *Religion and Vir-*  
 ‘ *tue* can’t be as effectually promoted *without*  
 ‘ the Use of *Prayer*, as by the Help of it;  
 ‘ we cannot conclusively deduce from the  
 ‘ *natural Effect* of Prayer upon our Minds,  
 ‘ the consequent *Obligation* to the Practice of  
 ‘ it. Suppose, for Instance, a *Deist* should  
 ‘ assert

' assert that regular, and serious, and frequent  
 ' *Meditation* upon our *Relation* to *God*, as  
 ' *dependent* and *sinful* Creatures, will be as  
 ' *effectual* towards exciting and improving  
 ' *religious Sentiments* and *Dispositions*, as the  
 ' *Act* of *Prayer*; then, its *Necessity*, as a  
 ' *Means* towards the *religious* and *virtuous*  
 ' *Ends*, upon which we grounded the *Obligation*, ceasing, does not the *Obligation*, so  
 ' far as it arises from its *natural Tendency*, cease  
 ' likewise? And if we be not obliged to the  
 ' *Act* of *Prayer*, on account of its Influence  
 ' upon *us*, his Creatures, and for the Sake of  
 ' *our own* Good; then we are brought back  
 ' to the Necessity of proving our *Obligation*  
 ' to the Practice of it, from some Considerations  
 ' respecting the *Deity*; the Absurdity  
 ' of which I have already prov'd.—We  
 ' must, therefore, proceed one Step farther,  
 ' and shew, from the *Nature* and *Circumstances*  
 ' of *Prayer*, that it is, *in itself*, not  
 ' only a *Means*, but a *necessary* Means; for-  
 ' asmuch as *Meditation*, or *Contemplation*,  
 ' under any possible Circumstances, never *can*  
 ' be made as *effectual* a Means towards the  
 ' Promotion of Religion and Virtue as *Prayer*  
 ' may be. I think, I can prove thus much;  
 ' but, I am satisfied I shall be the better able  
 ' to do it by the Assistance of your farther  
 ' Thoughts upon the Subject. Your Letter  
 ' has been of so much Use to me, that, with-  
 ' out it I could not have stated and proved  
 ' my own Notion in the manner that I have  
 ' now

‘ now done. Your Answer to an Objection  
 ‘ is just and acute ; but, as I am *Opponent*, I  
 ‘ have nothing to do with it.’

In answer to This Letter, I received another from him, consisting of nine Pages in *Folio*, full of Ingenuity and subtle Distinctions, but by no means satisfactory ; in some Places inconsistent, and the whole of it too *abstruse* to be of *general* Use, or Entertainment. At the End of his Letter he desired that the Dispute might be concluded by a *personal Interview* ; but, soon after, he was taken ill, and died before I had an Opportunity of seeing him ; and by his Death the World lost the Example of a pious *Christian*, and the Advantages of a very able Writer, while his Friends were deprived of an useful, entertaining, and agreeable Companion. I am glad of This decent Opportunity of paying my publick Respects to his Memory ; and, though, for the Reason above-mentioned, I do not think fit to *publish* his second Letter, I shall preserve it for the Satisfaction of any of his Friends who may have the Curiosity to peruse it.

About five and twenty Years ago (for so long have I given a particular Attention to This Subject) I took the Liberty of writing to another Gentleman, of the same Name, and of equal Eminence for his *metaphysical* Capacity ; I mean the late celebrated Mr. *Clarke*, of *Hull*. Tho’ I was a mere Stranger to him, he very readily complied with my Request, and sent me what he apprehended to be a conclusive Argument in

E

proof

proof of the Duty of *Prayer* from *natural Principles*. This Letter, with my Reply, I have lost, together with many other Papers, in the constant Hurry of a fatiguing, disagreeable Life; but I have not lost the Substance of them, because I soon took Occasion to work them up into a *Sermon* upon the Subject, and preached it with Approbation at the *University-Church* at *Cambridge*. His Argument was short, and, like his *Namesake's*, drawn from the *Fitness* of *Things*; not My Friend's *Fitness* of *Congruity*, as he styles it, but the *Fitness* of a *Means* to an *End*. He observed, very justly, that every *sober Deist* must own a *moral Obligation* to use the *most likely Means* to promote *Virtue*; and then proceeded to shew, that *Prayer* was a *Means* of promoting it, by the Influence which it must have upon our Minds when the Duty is properly discharged; and, consequently, that it must be every Man's *Duty* to *pray*. In my Reply, I agreed with him as to the *good Influences* of *Prayer*, that it was a *natural Means* of promoting *Virtue*; but denied that, *therefore*, it must be a *natural Duty*, because it might not be a *Means necessary* to the Support of *Virtue*. If *Virtue* may be as effectually supported and promoted by any *other Means*, then the *Necessity* of it ceases, and the Force of his Argument is destroyed, as I observed in my *Postscript* to my Letter to my other Friend. As I there said, if a *Deist* should pretend that *regular Meditation* may be as effectual a *Means* to promote *Virtue*, as *Prayer* can be, it is incumbent upon us, if we will argue with him upon *natural Principles*,



*Principles*, to disprove that Assertion, and shew that *Meditation*, under any possible Circumstances, cannot be so *effectual* a Means as *Prayer* may be made. In my Reply I attempted to prove This, and had the good Luck to do it to his Satisfaction; and I make no doubt of doing it here to the Satisfaction of every impartial Reader. But, before I enter upon the Argument, I must observe, that the *Deists*, when they would *seem* to substitute *regular Contemplation* in the room of *Prayer*, are not sincere, neither would it answer their Purpose, because such frequent Returns of serious Contemplation would keep their Consciences too often awake, and be too great a Check to the Indulgence of their Vices; which, I dare say, is their *real* Objection against *Prayer*. This Observation I thought proper, by way of Caution to unwary *Christians*, against the deceitful Artifices of the *Deists*.

All *Deists*, who profess to believe the Principles of *natural* Religion, must allow, that all Men are obliged to use the most effectual Means that our *Reason* is capable of shewing us, for the promoting of *Religion* and *Virtue*. The Passions of *Fear* and *Love* are the great Springs of human Actions: All *Religion* and *Virtue* consist in our *Obedience* to the *Will* of God, and in the *Imitation* of his *imitable* Perfections: Our *Fear* and *Love* of him are the strongest Incitements to such an Obedience and Imitation. The Question, then, between *us* and the *Deists* is, *what* appears to our *Reason*, from the *Nature* of

E 2

*Things*,

*Things*, the most effectual Means of cultivating and improving those two ruling Passions. *We* say, that a constant and regular Intercourse between our *Maker* and *us*, by *Prayer*, is the most effectual Means; and that it appears *from hence* to be the *Will* of God that we *should* pray to him. *They* say, that it will be sufficient for the Purposes of *Religion* and *Virtue*, because sufficient towards the Cultivation and Improvement of the *Fear* and the *Love* of God, if we accustom ourselves constantly and regularly to *think* upon *God* and *ourselves*, and the *Relation* that we stand in towards him; and, consequently, that we cannot prove *Prayer* to be a *reasonable* Act, much less to be a *Duty*, or that the Honour of *speaking* to the supreme Being is so much as *permitted* us. This, I think, is a fair State of the Question between us; and without the least Distrust of the Issue, I shall attempt as fairly to determine it; which I shall do by considering the *natural* Consequences of each Scheme. But, before I come to the *main* Argument,—a Comparison of the *natural* Effects of *Meditation*, and That Act of the Mind which we call *Prayer*, I shall make a short Observation, not impertinent to the Point in Dispute.—If This Business were left to be done by *Meditation*, very few, even of those who are capable of it, would ever give themselves the Trouble of meditating so seriously. It requires a *Habit* of thinking regularly, to be able to range their Thoughts in such an orderly Manner, as may imprint them so strongly upon their Minds, as may give them

a proper Influence upon their Conduct. If it be said that This Insufficiency may be supplied by a written Abstract, upon those Subjects for their constant Use; I answer, that This would not *fix* the *Attention* so much as *directing* our Thoughts to some *Object* is able to do; which naturally leads me to shew that *Praying*, that is, *speaking*, to God, is a *stronger*, and more *influential* Act of the Mind, than barely *thinking* of him; and, consequently, better fitted to promote *Religion* and *Virtue* than *Contemplation*, considered under all possible Circumstances of Advantage.—*Speaking*, or *addressing* ourselves to one another, is an *habitual* and *familiar* Act of the Mind, the Method of preserving an Intercourse between one another; the usual and most effectual Means of exciting the several Passions of Anger and Love, Desire and Hatred; by the Means of which *habitual* Practice, the Fear and the Love of God, a lively Sense of his Presence and Attributes, will be more strongly preserved by *speaking*, or *addressing* our Minds to him after the usual manner, in which we have been accustomed to speak to each other, than by bare *Contemplation*, the former Action of the Mind receiving a particular Force from *Habit* and *Familiarity*. Neither can Contemplation be made so *habitual*, and *familiar*, and *easy* to the Generality of Mankind, as the Action of *speaking* to another Being; because the Occasions of *speaking* to one another are *frequent* and *unavoidable*, which makes That Action of the Mind *habitual* and *familiar*; whereas we are

so far from being under the Necessity of acquiring a *Habit* of serious and close *Meditation*, that most People find it a very difficult Thing, because the Attention is diverted by external Objects, or by Ideas before received into the Mind from such Objects. But *Prayer*, that is, *speaking*, or *directing*, our Minds to God, does, as it were, make the Divine Being *present* to our very *Senses*; forasmuch as the same Action of the Mind, has been usually accompanied with some *external* Object visible to the Senses: Besides, the Actions of the *Body* concurring with that of the *Mind*, must also, by the Force of *Habit*, help to fix the Attention, and make the Effects the stronger. I verily think This Argument can never be answered without denying *human Nature*, and the Power of *Habit*, to be what we daily *see* and *feel* them to be; infomuch, that if the Duty of *Prayer* were to be wholly omitted, the very Notion of a *God* and his *Providence* would be quite lost among the Generality of Mankind, as to any religious Effects upon their Minds. This is not an *abstracted metaphysical* Argument, calculated only for the *learned Philosopher* who has been accusom'd to *nice Speculation*, but it is an Argument drawn from *known Facts* and *Experience*, and such a one as any Person who will be at the Trouble of attending to it may understand. By the way of Illustration, let us suppose that we had offended one of our Fellow-creatures, no doubt can be made but that if we were seriously to reflect upon it, it would affect every honest and generous Mind; but

but if, instead of *barely thinking* upon it, we were to come into his Presence, fall upon our Knees before him, and in a most submissive Manner ask his Pardon; This would have a much greater Effect, help more to increase the Sense of our Guilt, and to form a Resolution to behave better for the future. Thus it is with regard to our Addresses to *God*. By using the same Actions, both of Body and Mind, by which we constantly converse with one another, we shall make him more immediately present to our Thoughts, which will have a much greater Influence upon us than *barely thinking* of him could have.

If This Argument be conclusive with regard to *private* Prayer, (and I may safely defy the whole Body of the *Deists* to disprove it) it will hold much stronger, and more apparently, for *publick* and *joint* Prayer, tho' the latter has generally been thought less capable of being proved from *natural Principles*. In the Performance of *publick* and *joint* Prayer, the *Looks* and *Gestures* and *Voices* of the Congregation will help to kindle and inflame in each other religious Affections and Dispositions. For instance, the united Voice of a Number of People confessing their Sins, with a proper Tone of Voice, accompanied with suitable Looks and Gestures, expressive of Sorrow, and Shame, and Fear; I say, their *united* Voices, and Looks, and Behaviour, must in the *very nature of Things*, be more effectual towards promoting the proper ends of Confession, than any *private* Acknowledgement of our Sins can

possibly be, because the Condition of the Mind, during its Union with the *Body*, is such, that it necessarily receives strong Impressions from *external* Objects. To deny This, is to deny that we have any *Senses* at all, or that we have ever had any *Experience* of their *Effects* upon the *Mind*. And if This be, (what every one of us daily *experiences* it to be) the present State of *human Nature*, the consequent Expediency of *publick* and *joint* Prayer, considered as the *most* effectual Means of promoting *Virtue*, and our Obligations from the Principles of *natural* Religion, to perform those Duties, are *demonstratively* True: And, therefore, let these proud Boasters of their *Reason*, and *pretended* Friends to *Virtue*, disprove This Account of the present State of human Nature, and the Influence of our *Senses* upon our *Minds*, or let them throw off the Mask, and openly acknowledge that, in their Opinion, there is no such thing as *Virtue*, or any *moral* *Obligation* really subsisting. But, I must repeat what I have already observed, that tho' these Arguments are quite Satisfactory to *us*, whose Minds have been strengthened and illuminated by *frequent Revelations*, I am far from thinking that *unassisted Reason* could have discovered them so clearly and strongly to Mankind, as they *now* appear to us. This, however, only shews us our own Happiness, in having the great Advantages of *Revelation*, but does not, in the least, weaken the Force of the Argument in respect to the *Deists*. Before I take leave of these violent *Patrons* of *natural*  
*Religion*,

*Religion*, I must suggest another Observation to them, which deserves their Consideration; I mean, the *general Agreement* of Mankind in the *publick Worship* of their *Deity*, or *Deities*. There never was a People, even in the darkest Corner of the *Heathen World*, who did not acknowledge their Belief of a God and this Providence, by *publickly worshipping* him. Now, This *universal Practice*, while it testifies the concurrent *Sentiments* of Mankind, is as good a Proof of the *Reasonableness* of the *Duty* of Prayer, and of their Obligations, considered as *Men*, to perform it, as the general Belief of a *God* has always been allowed to be a Proof of the *Reality* of his Existence. For, into what can we resolve such an *universal Concurrence* of *Opinion* and *Practice* but into the Voice of *God*, or the Voice of *Nature*, to both which all *reasonable* Creatures must acknowledge themselves obliged to hearken. We must either suppose that the *Duty* of Prayer was originally made known to Mankind by an *immediate external Revelation*, and propagated to succeeding Times by *Tradition*; or, that it appears so plain from the *very Frame* and *Constitution* of our Beings, as *dependent* Creatures, that *Reason* has always assented to our Obligations to the Practice of it; or, that Mankind have been led to the Practice of it by a kind of *Instinct* implanted in us by the Author of our Nature, in order to preserve in our Minds a constant and lively Sense of our *Dependence* upon him: This Argument deserves to be considered, and will not easily be answered, by those who would be

thought to believe the Truths of *natural Religion*, tho' we CHRISTIANS are less concerned to maintain the Force of it. The *Deists* (as *Infidels* are pleased to style themselves) are apt to extol the *moral Philosophy* of the *Heathens*, and the great Abilities of the *Authors*. The late Lord *Bolinbrooke* has exceeded any of his Predecessors in his Encomiums upon them, and has made a most pompous Parade, with Extracts of their Maxims. But, what was the Design of all this Lavishness? Not to give a Sanction to *Virtue*, by *their* Authorities; but to discredit *Revelation*: If the Intention had been to recommend and promote the Interest of *Virtue*, they would pay the same Regard to the Sentiments of those great Men in respect to *Religion* and *Piety*; whereas they pay none at all, but are quite silent upon That Head. All the antient *Heathens* had the highest Esteem and Zeal for the *religious Worship* of their *Gods*. The *Romans*, in particular, laid so great a Stress upon it, that they ascrib'd the Success of their Arms to their *Piety*, which, in their Opinion, procured them the Assistance of the *divine Providence*. Not so, the present *Deists*; who have improved so much upon their *Predecessors* that they seem to exclude a *Providence* out of the World; and, in consequence of their *Infidelity*, never pay their Devotions to *God*, while they deny his *Existence*, or his *Interposal* in the Government of the World. I have lately heard a very remarkable Thing, from very good Hands, of the *Right Honourable* Writer, above-mention'd.



tion'd. The late *Dr. Conyers Middleton* left a *MS.* upon *Prayer*; not in *Favour* of it, the Reader may be morally assured. Whether the *Dr.* left it with an Intention of having it publish'd after his Death my Informer did not say; but the Widow, it seems, was prevail'd upon to suppress it. His Lordship, by some Means, or another, contriv'd to get a Sight of it, and found it so agreeable to his Opinions and Schemes, that he has taken proper Measures for its Publication. I hope I am misinform'd; but the Gentleman who gave me this Account is a Person of such good Intelligence, and so much Credit, that I believe it to be true; and I am the more inclin'd to believe it, because such a Design seems quite agreeable to the Writings of his *Lordship*, and the *Dr.* How it can be consistent with their large Pretensions of *Zeal for Virtue*, and the Good of Mankind. must be a *Secret* till some of these *inlighten'd Philosophers* shall think fit to shew us. At present, I am willing to think, I have proved, and shall still more fully prove, that by discrediting *Prayer* they are doing irreparable Injury to *Virtue*, and the *Publick*. Be that as it will, their *Inconsistency* and *Partiality* are undeniable, while they so highly extol the *moral* Sentiments of the antient Heathens, but disdainfully reject their *religious* Opinions. Whatever Weight those celebrated Names carry with them, *Piety* and *Prayer* claim it all. As to those who believe the Truth of *Revelation*, they have a continued *Series* of Examples; not of *Philosophers*, not of *mere Men*, but of *Prophets*,

*phets*, and *Apostles*, who lived and acted, continually, under the immediate *Inspiration* and *Direction* of God; whose *deliberate* and *habitual* Conduct, therefore, is not only an infallible Rule of what is *lawful*, but of what is binding upon us, as a *necessary Duty* in Matters of This Nature. We have, moreover, the Practice of *Christ* himself, who has expressly told us, that it is our Duty to follow his Steps; that he took upon him our Nature, and dwelt among us, in order to instruct us by his *Example*, as well as by *positive Precepts*. I need not produce Instances to prove a Fact that must be sufficiently obvious to every one who has looked into the *Bible*, or heard it read. But, besides all these *Examples*, we have *express* Precepts for the Duty of *Prayer*, both in the *old* and *new Testament*. I know, it is a current Opinion among many learned Men, that there is no *express Precept* for Prayer under the *old Testament*: Of this Opinion was that excellent Man, Bishop *Blackball*: At the 86th Page of the *Octavo* Edition of his Sermons, upon these Words, *when thou prayest*, &c. he observes, that “ It is not  
“ here *directed*, or *commanded*, that we should  
“ ever put up any Prayers to God; but ’tis *sup-*  
“ *posed* by our Saviour that This is a *Duty*, and  
“ that Men are generally so persuaded of the  
“ Necessity of it, that they cannot be satisfied  
“ in their own Minds, while they live in the  
“ Neglect thereof; and ’tis indeed a Duty taught  
“ so clearly by the Light of *Nature*, that there  
“ was no Need that it should be enjoined by  
“ any

“ any *positive Precept*; and therefore we do not  
 “ find that in the Law of *Moses*, there is any  
 “ *Precept* commanding This Duty.” I have  
 several Remarks to make upon This Passage,  
 which is by no means accurate, or just. In the  
*first* Place, if he means, by *in* the Law of  
*Moses*, the *Ten Commandments*, it is true, but  
 nothing to the Purpose because, if it be any  
 where commanded *under the Jewish Dispensa-*  
*tion*, it is the same Thing. *Secondly*, a Thing  
 may carry the *Force*, or *Obligation*, of a *Precept*,  
 tho’ it be not express’d *directly* in the *preceptive*  
*Stile*. If it any way appears that it is the *Will*  
 of *God* that we should do a thing, his *Will* is a  
*Law*, or *Command*, for the doing of it, let the  
*Manner* of *Expression* be what it will; and  
 answers all the Purposes of an *express Precept*.  
 This I apprehend to be the Case with regard to  
 the Passage in our *Saviour’s* Sermon, which the  
 Bishop quotes; but it is not to my present Pur-  
 pose to consider it. *Thirdly*, he says, that *Prayer*  
 is a *Duty so clearly taught by the Light of Na-*  
*ture*, that there was no Need of a POSITIVE  
 PRECEPT to enjoin it. The *Light of Nature* is  
 an *ambiguous* Expression, as I have before ob-  
 serv’d. If he meant that *mere Reason*, *unassisted*  
 by *Revelation*, could *clearly* discover *Prayer* to  
 be a *Duty*, I have already shewn the contrary to  
 be true. Nay, farther, that without *Revelation*  
 we could not prove that we are so much as *per-*  
*mitted* to pray to *God*, consequently, that the  
*Practice* took its *Rise* from a *positive Precept*. But,  
 now let us enquire whether *God* has not declar’d  
 it,

it, in the *old* Testament, to be his *Will* that we should *pray* to him; if he *has*, then *Prayer* is *enjoined* by a *positive Command* under the *Jewish* Dispensation. Before the building of the *Temple*, there had been *Places*, particularly, the *Tabernacle*, consecrated by the *Appointment of God*, for his *Worship*, where he gave *visible Tokens* of his more *immediate Presence*: It is *absolutely certain*, from plain *Passages of Scripture*, that *Prayer* was practised in those *Days*; from whence it must be concluded, that *Prayer* was *Part of the Worship* which *God required* them to offer up in those *Places*, which he had *appointed*, and *sanctified*. But, the *Temple*, which was built by *God's immediate Direction*, is stiled, by himself, the *House of Prayer*. In *This House* he promised to meet his *People*, to hear, and accept their *Addresses*. Is not *This a divine Appointment* to *pray* to *God* in this *consecrated Place*? To *This House* they were to *look* whenever they *prayed*, in *any other Place*, in full *Affurance* that *God* would hear and accept such *Prayers*. Was not *This a divine Appointment*, *commanding* all *People* to *pray*? But, there are in the *Old Testament* many *express Directions* to *This Purpose*, such as these. *O thou that bearest Prayer, unto thee shall all Flesh come.—Prayer shall be made ever unto him, and daily shall he be praised.—Sing forth the Honour of his Name, make his Praise to be glorious.—Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy Works?—O bless our God, ye People.—Offer to God Thanksgiving.—Then they shall confess their Sins that they have done.—Are not these*

these *positive Directions* for every Part of Prayer? Were not these Directions given by *divine Inspiration*? Is not, then, the Duty of Prayer a *divine Appointment*? Was not all This done during the *Jewish Dispensation*, while the Law of *Moses* was in Force? And if all This be true, as it most certainly is, how can any learned Man say, that when our Saviour gave his Disciples Directions concerning Prayer, Men were *supposed* to have practised this Duty, not by any *divine Appointment*, but upon the Principles of *natural Religion* only?—If we proceed to the *New Testament* we meet with Variety of the plainest Precepts; some of which I shall transcribe.—*Men ought always to pray.—I will that Men pray every where.—Pray without ceasing.—Watch and pray.—Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by Prayer and Supplication; with Thanksgiving, let your Requests be made known unto God.* I avoid troubling the Reader with any Quotations, where the *particular Parts* of Prayer are *distinctly* mentioned, because *That* has been done under the first Head; where I shewed the different Acceptations of the Word in different Places, and that it sometimes comprehends *every Part* of Prayer, as in the following Words, *pray with all Prayer.* But This Point is so very obvious, that no Man can deny that *every Part* of Prayer is commanded in the *New Testament*. The only Difficulty is, to account for the Neglect of This important Duty in those who profess their Belief of the *Bible*, and especially in those who profess themselves the Disciples of  
*Christ,*

*Christ*, while they refuse to follow the *Example*, or *Precepts* of their *Master*. He prayed, himself, both in *publick*, and in *private*; in the *Temple*, and on *Mountains*, and in *Desarts*; in the most *frequented*, and in the most *retir'd* Places; he hath *taught*, and *commanded*, all his Followers to pray; and, yet, we have too much Reason to fear that Numbers, who *dishonour* his Name by calling themselves *Christians*, never offer up any Prayers to God in their Closets, or with their Families; and some there are who scarce ever appear in any Place of *publick Worship*; very few that attend *publick* Prayers so often as they *might*, and *would* do if they had a right Notion of their Obligation to the Performance of a Duty so positively enjoined, so advantageous and comfortable to those who perform it properly. The *first* of these, the determined *Infidel*, and notoriously *irreligious* Professor of *Christianity*, I can only *pray* for, not having much Hope of *converting*, and *reclaiming* them; but I shall endeavour to enforce a more frequent Practice of This Duty upon all those who retain any serious Sense of Religion.

## C H A P. IV.

### *Concerning the Effects of Prayer.*

**I**N the last Chapter I shew'd, from the *Nature* of Prayer, that it must be a more influential Means of *Religion* and *Virtue* than *Meditation*, or *Contemplation*, under any possible Circumstances;

cumstances ; but I shall now enlarge upon the advantageous Effects of it upon our Minds. Upon this Occasion I shall cite a Passage from that truly pious *Christian*, Archbishop *Sharp*, in one of his most admirable Sermons, p. 30, Vol. 4. “ Prayer is to our *Souls* what Meat and “ Drink are to our Bodies ; their Repast, their “ Nourishment, and Support : Prayer is the “ great universal Instrument by which we fetch “ down Blessings from above, and obtain what- “ ever we want : Prayer is our Defence against “ Sin, and Temptation ; the Security of our Vir- “ tue, and the especial Means to advance it.

“ Prayer is the Wing of our Souls, whereby “ we raise up ourselves, above this lower World “ to the God above, and with whom while we “ therein converse, we become more and more “ transform’d into his Nature.

“ Whatever Anticipations of Heaven there “ are here upon Earth ; whatever Foretastes we “ *Christians* have, in these Bodies, of the Hap- “ piness of Eternity, they are all effected by the “ Means of *Prayer*.”

This *general* Account of the Matter is certainly just, and strong, and tender ; what That *Saint* on Earth experienced in himself ; what every other *Christian* may feel, in Proportion as he approaches towards *his* angelic Disposition, and habitual Exercise of the Duty. But, if we consider attentively the Nature of the Thing, we may easily perceive *how* the proper Performance of every Part of Prayer produces pious and virtuous Dispositions. When we praise and magnify

God's glorious Name, and wonderful Works, we are employed like the *Angels* in *Heaven*, and, by these heavenly Exercises, are qualifying ourselves to join with those blessed Spirits in their eternal *Hallelujahs*; and at the same Time fitting ourselves for the several Duties of *this* Life. When we address ourselves to God as the Possessor of all Perfections, the Fountain of all Good, the Author of all that Happiness that we have, or expect; as a Being in whom are all the Excellencies that we admire in this World, and from whom every thing that is amiable and attracting flow as so many Rivulets from his inexhaustible Fountain of Beauty and Goodness, as so many Emanations from his infinite Fulness; I say, a Habit of addressing ourselves to him under this pleasing and engaging, but awful, Character; cannot fail of working in us a settled *Fear*, and *Love*, and *Gratitude*. We shall *fear* him, because he is dreadful, even in his most amiable Perfections, because they are *infinite*; we must *love* him, not only because he is the most amiable Being, but because he exercises all his Perfections for the Good of his Creatures; and our Hearts must be tenderly affected with the Sense of his communicating to us all the Good and Happiness that we enjoy. This triple Cord of *Fear*, *Love*, and *Gratitude*, will bind us to an Imitation of his Nature, and Obedience to his Commands. This constant Intercourse with God in *Prayer* will imprint upon our Minds an habitual Sense of his *Presence*, which must needs have an Influence upon every Part of our Behaviour;



viour; be a perpetual Check upon us; keep the Conscience always awake, and tender; it will fix in us such a thorough Belief of God's governing Providence, as will greatly help to preterve an *Evenness* and *Composure* of Temper; it will correct any unbecoming *Levity* of Mind, and all *intemperate Mirth*; it will *spiritualize* the Thoughts and Inclinations of the *Carnal* and *Sensual*; cure the *Worldly-minded* of their Ambition and Avarice; it will humble the Proud, and make the Vain more Modest: For, can a Man be *proud*, and *vain*, who daily appears before his Judge in the Capacity of a Sinner that has forfeited his Life! Before his Creator, as a Beggar that constantly subsists upon his *universal Bounty*! Can a Man be elated on account of any *personal Excellencies*, who daily acknowledges his own many *Imperfections*, and the *infinite Perfections* of That God to whom we owe every thing that is *excellent* in us! By *daily Prayer* a Man daily acknowledges that we are all, in the main, as *Men*, and as *Christians*, upon a *Level*; and can he overvalue himself, and disdainfully treat others, on account of some *little, external Advantages* that distinguish us as Members of *civil Society*! But, I shall *inlarge* upon some Particulars which will fully shew, not only the great Advantage, but even the *Necessity*, of Prayer, in order to make us good Christians.

1<sup>st</sup>, It is plain from the Holy Scriptures, and confess'd on all hands, that we ought to be *heavenly-minded*; to set our *Affections* on *Things above*, and not on *Things on the Earth*. Now,

this is utterly impossible for us to do, unless we practise the Duty of *Prayer*: For, we find, by daily Experience, that, by reason of the great Corruption of our Nature, the great Variety of sensual Objects, and the strong Impressions which such Objects make upon us, our Souls are groveling in the Dust; we are, in our Affections, as it were, *chained* to the *Earth*; we seem to regard little else but *temporal* Things; accumulating *Wealth*, either upon the impertinent Scheme of hoarding it up, and making no Use of it, or upon a worse Motive, That of consuming it upon our Lusts; at best, providing a reputable Subsistence for our Families, Relations; or Friends, without a due Attention to our *own*, or *others* eternal Welfare in the *next* Life. It is with the utmost Difficulty that ever we *raise* our Minds to *Heaven*, and *force* them to contemplate upon *God*, and the spiritual Comforts of dwelling with him in Glory. No sooner do we lift up our Hearts, but the dead Weight of Infirmities, and Sins, and earthly Concerns, presses us down again, so that we are quite averse to the sublime Joys of meditating upon the best Objects. Now, this Unwillingness to think upon God, to separate ourselves from this present World, that we may with the greater Freedom taste of the more refined Pleasures of *Religion*, cannot be cured but by the Exercise of *Prayer*; which, the more it is used, does the more powerfully, and with the greater Ease, raise our Thoughts aloft, and carry them up beyond the Rubbish and Dross of sensual Concerns. Our *Converse*  
with

with God by *Prayer* does by insensible Degrees; first, *create*, and then *quicken* in us an Appetite after immaterial, and immortal Pleasures; it kindles within us warm Desires after what is really noble, and good; and fills us with such an ardent Zeal for Objects of this kind, as will cause us heartily to love them, and eagerly to pursue them. *Prayer* is the very *Food* of our Souls, and supports them in their *spiritual* Life; it gives them Heat and Vigour in their *Christian* Course, and without it they are sluggish and inactive. This is evident to the most careless Observer of Mankind; they who *neglect* *Prayer* are negligent about every thing relating to *another* Life. Tell them how they may acquire *worldly Advantages*; open to them a Prospect of getting *Preferment*; propose to them a Scheme of *Amusement*, and they will soon hear you; they are all Attention; their Desires are immediately upon the Wing; their Imaginations upon the Stretch, the whole Man all alive; but tell them of *dying*, and going into the *other* World, and you strike them to the *Heart*, they are in the utmost Confusion, their Spirits sink, their Countenance changes, they are in a manner dead: Their Souls are wholly possessed and actuated, by the good Things of this Life; *They* are their only Felicity, their only Principle of Life, and Action. But, such as converse with God by *Prayer* do thereby *spiritualize* their Souls; they *refine* their Appetites; they grow in Love with the Life to come; they truly relish every Thing that is subservient to that grand View; they

prepare themselves, by *Devotion*, for the Employment of *Angels* in Heaven; and begin, or, at least, have a Foretaste of, their future Joys, in the blessed Intercourse between God, and their own Souls. This is the Difference between a *natural* Man, and a *spiritual* Man; the *natural* Man delights in *temporal* Things, and his Love towards them increases perpetually, by his perpetual Acquaintance with them. But, the principal Delight of the *spiritual* Man consists chiefly in *spiritual* Things. He hath quite different *Principles* and *Appetites*, and in the Exercise of his *spiritual* *Faculties*, his *spiritual* *Life* consists. Now, as the *bodily* *Appetites* must cease unless supported with daily Food, so will the *Appetites* of the *Soul* be destroyed, and the *Soul* lose all Sense of *spiritual* *Pleasure*, unless, by the Exercise of *Prayer*, they be fed, and nourish'd, and thereby preserved, in Vigour, and Activity: As an Intimacy with *worldly* and *sensual* *Enjoyments* inflames our Love for them, and our Estrangement from them cools our Affections for them, so a frequent Conversation with *God* by *Prayer* makes us take the more Delight in him; and our Absence from him, by omitting our *Prayers*, our leaving off, or discontinuing, this friendly Intercourse with him, gradually creates a *Strangeness*, and cools our Affections; and we lose that *Heavenly-mindedness*, which is our absolute Duty, and a necessary Qualification for our Employment and Happiness among the blessed Inhabitants above.

2dly,

2dly, The Exercise of *Prayer* is of infinite Service towards our living comfortably in all Circumstances of Life. That we ought to be satisfied and easy under the different Dispensations of Providence, is so plain a Truth, that I think no body can be ignorant of it. Our blessed *Lord* teaches us to pray that God's Will *may be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven*; and, consequently, we are indispensably bound to submit to all the Disposals of our heavenly Father; not only to be *contented*, but *cheerful* under them. Now, in order to this State of Mind, two Things are necessary.—*First*, That we be not over anxious about the Success of our Affairs.—*Secondly*, That we be not displeas'd with such Evils as are actually come upon us; and in both these Cases the constant Exercise of *Prayer*, when rightly performed, will be very helpful.

*First*, I say, it makes Men perfectly easy with respect to *future Contingencies*; with respect to what *may* happen in the *Changes* of this uncertain Life. It is evident that an *over-careful* Temper is a great Misfortune, it robs a Man of all present Satisfaction, and makes his Life a Burden to him; but PRAYER *removes* this great Evil: He that is accusom'd to converse with his *Creator*, the *wise* and *good* Governour of the World, by so doing practises *Resignation*, gives himself up *wholly* into God's Hands, and thereby acquires the Habit of being *without Carefulness*; because, having trusted all Things in the Hands of a *good* and *gracious* Master, of a *kind* and *tender* Father; he cannot but be assured that all

his Affairs shall be so order'd as, in the final Issue of things, shall be best for him; and *Anxiety* is so utterly inconsistent with this absolute Resignation, that the Practice of the one must necessarily destroy the other. Besides, he that does rightly perform the Duty of Prayer, does always pray for a Blessing upon all his Endeavours; and whenever he sets about any *particular* Business, he begs God's peculiar Providence over him in it; when he has done this he cannot doubt of as much Success as is consistent with his own *real* Good, tho', perhaps, not always what is most *agreeable* to him: And, therefore, every good Man, thus imploring the Blessing of God upon his Endeavours, may depend upon Success whenever it is not better for him to be without it. For which Reason, he that thus practises *Prayer*, can never be solicitous about *Futurity*; he is absolutely certain that, upon the whole, every thing shall turn out to his Advantage: This gives him a Tranquillity of Mind to which others must be Strangers. *They* are divided and torn to Pieces by perplexing Thoughts; their Minds, like the troubled Sea that casteth up Mire and Dirt, is frequently foreboding Disasters; and, having placed no Confidence in *God*, the great Disposer of all Things, they have no Security that any real Calamity which they dread shall not happen, thwart their Designs, and bring them into Distress. But,

*Secondly*, the Exercise of *Prayer* can make Men easy under all those Calamities, *which* are *actually*

*actually* fallen upon them. The best Man upon Earth cannot promise himself an absolute Security from temporal Evils and Afflictions, because God oftentimes sees it convenient to lay Sorrows upon his choicest and most favourite Servants for their Good ; so that they must taste of That which, to Flesh and Blood, is a bitter Cup. Now, when these Calamities do befall us, certainly they are very burthenfome to human Nature ; and, if we have not Assistance from *Religion*, we know not how to bear them with any Temper. We may be but too plainly convinced of this by observing what many Persons will do, how they will sacrifice their Conscience, and risk their eternal Happiness, to avoid them, or to get rid of them ; and, therefore, it must needs be a great Happiness to be delivered from the Burden of such sad Accidents as human Foresight cannot teach us to shun, nor human Power enable us to remove : Nor, is it only our *Happiness*, but our *Duty* also, thus patiently to submit, and take off our bitter Portion with a chearful Resignation : God has positively commanded us not to murmur, or repine, but with all Readiness and Alacrity to receive his Chastisements, and *to count it all Joy when we fall into diverse Temptations, knowing that the Tryal of our Faith worketh Patience.* This was the Practice of the blessed *Apostles*, who were transported by their Sufferings for CHRIST ; not into *Despair*, nor an *inveterate Hatred* of the Rod that smote them, but into *triumphant Exultation*, and the most *flaming Love* of their Master, who counted them

worthy

worthy to suffer in his Name. This must be our Practice; too, if we expect to arrive at those happy Regions, where They who suffer for the *christian* Faith, or, any ways, in the Discharge of their Duty, shall be glorified together with CHRIST. But, *how* is this absolute Resignation, this necessary Duty, possible to him that does not practise the Duty of *Prayer*? He *kicks* against the Pricks; he makes his Misfortunes gall him the more by bearing the Yoke with Impatience: Whereas, he that *prays* to *God* in his Distress, knowing, that it is the Will of his heavenly Father that he should be afflicted, submits his *Soul* and *Body* to his Disposal; begs *his* Assistance to enable him to bear the Cross, and, *then*, is heartily willing to take it upon his Shoulders: He considers that *God* is his *Friend*, who intends, and acts, for his *Benefit*; and, by frequent *Converse* with his *Friend* in *Prayer*, he becomes so thoroughly satisfied of his real Love, and Kindness towards him, that he never utters a repining Word, or entertains a discontented Thought. Knowing that he has used his best Endeavours, if *God* sees fit that he should be disappointed, he does not desire that the Ends of infinite Wisdom should be defeated: And, if at any time his Fortune be blasted, his Family visited with Sicknes, or himself cast upon a Bed of *Sorrows*; why, he is assured that Afflictions do not rise out the *Dust*, but are sent for wise Purposes, by the supreme Governour of the World; and, therefore, he retires *within himself*; converses with that *God* who laid the  
 Trouble



Trouble upon him; he tells him that he is entirely satisfied, begs such a Measure of his Grace as may sustain his loaded Mind from sinking under the Weight of its Burden.—Every one knows what a Relief it is to a Person in Affliction to have a faithful Friend, to whom he can freely unbosom himself, especially if he be such a one as he knows to be both able and willing, to assist him. What infinite Satisfaction and Comfort, then, must it be to an afflicted Soul to unbosom itself to its dear Redeemer and omnipotent God; who, alone, is able, and who is most certainly willing to help it, either by removing the Complaint, or turning it to a spiritual Advantage, and amply rewarding it in another World. Under these Circumstances of Distress, let us imagine some such Conversation as this, between God and the afflicted Soul.

“ The Soul, by *Prayer*, laments its sad Condition, lays open all its Complaints and Grievances, acknowledges the Justice, and magnifies the Love of God, in thus dealing with him, humbly imploring the divine Assistance to comfort, support, and relieve it.” In answer to this Address, God, by the Holy Scriptures (which the Soul by Faith applies to itself) and the secret Suggestions of his Spirit, “ Testifies his sincere Affection; kindly declares the *Reasons* of his laying on the Burden, with an Assurance that it shall continue no longer than Mercy itself shall see necessary; comforts it with Promises of sufficient Assistance, and shews it the Glory of that Crown which shall

“ be

“ be the Reward of a patient Submission.” In such a Case, is it possible for a Person to be impatient, to be dejected after such a Conversation with God? All the black Clouds of Melancholy and Despair are dispell’d by the *Light of his Countenance*, and a bright Sun-shine ensues. Or, if the Storm be broke, and beats down with the utmost Vehemence, God shelters it under the Wings of his all-saving Mercy; amidst all the Roaring of the Thunders, the Flashes of Lightning, and Rattling of the Rain, an inexpressible Calmness spreads itself over the Mind, a Serenity of Temper refreshes and smooths it, every rising Murmur is hush’d, every repining Thought quash’d, and all the Passions of the Soul discharg’d in a Torrent of Love and Admiration; the most intense Love, the most perfectly satisfying Admiration of God and his Goodness. Can any Exstasy of the Soul equal this? And may not this Enjoyment be attained by *Prayer*, by *intense* and *fervent* Prayer? Yes, blessed be God’s Grace! it may; the truly *pious* and *religious* Man *knows*, and *feels*, that it may; he is convinced by the *sweetest Experience*, that Submission to God by *Prayer* is the highest Delight, that human Nature is capable of enjoying on this side Heaven.—And now, what is the *dry Reading*, and *cold Meditation*, recommended to us by the *Deists*, instead of *Prayer*, to this animating, this inflaming Exercise? And how can these *Hypocrites* have the Assurance to expect to be *thought Friends to Mankind*, when they attempt to deprive them of the most exalted Pleasure,

sure,

sure, and the most powerful Remedy for the Evils of Life? Or how can they pretend to serve the Interest of *Virtue*, while they endeavour to destroy the most effectual Means of supporting it?

It were easy to shew, that, without frequent and earnest *Prayer*, it is as impossible to bear *Prosperity* with an even Mind, as it is to support ourselves under *Adversity*. I might have said *more*, especially, where it is *sudden* and *unexpected*. There are many good Reasons to be assign'd for this. The Mind is more *weakened* and *enervated* by *Prosperity*, than by *Adversity*. When People are in *Distress*, they are naturally *composed* and *thoughtful*: A Flow of *Prosperity* *dissipates* Thought, and puts the Spirits in a *Ferment*; adds a great Quantity of *Sail*, while it lessens the *Balast*, and renders the Mind more liable to be overset. Under *Adversity*, Men have not, either the *Inclination*, or the *Opportunity* to *take Pleasure*, and gratify their *Lusts*. *Prosperity* gives both *Appetite* and *Capacity*. A State of *Adversity*, where there is a tolerable Disposition, *softens* and *bumbles* the Mind; *Prosperity* disposes to *Pride* and an *Unconcernedness* for others, to *Cruelty* and *Oppression*. I could say a great deal more, but the little that I have said, may serve to shew how much the *Rich* and *Prosperous* stand in need of the Assistance of *Prayer*, to keep them within the Bounds of Duty. But, their greatest Misfortune of all is, that the more they stand in need of it, the less they are inclin'd to make use of it. When People are in

a *forlorn* Condition they naturally *desire*, and *seek* for *Help*; and if they have no Prospect of finding it on *Earth*, they will look up to *Heaven* for it: But, the *Successful* and the *Wealthy*, abounding with every thing, are apt to forget *God*, their *great Benefactor*, to whom they owe every thing; and, while their Temptations make them the more in want of his Grace, they are the more apt to slight it. But,

*Thirdly*, The Exercise of *Prayer* is necessary in order to the Practice of the Duty of *loving our Enemies*—Forgiveness of Enemies is a Lesson which Mankind can hardly learn; it is a Yoke to which they do very unwillingly submit their Necks: There is something within us which makes our Hearts rise and swell, and our Blood boil, whenever we receive an Injury, or Affront; and it is very difficult for us to subdue this Turbulency, and keep down angry Resentments: But, it is utterly impossible for a *mere Man* so FAR to conquer himself, as to make his *bitter Enemy* the Object of his *Love*; to be *kind* and *tender-hearted* to, and be willing to do all good Offices for, the Person who has loaded him with Injustice, &c. And, yet, this difficult Thing *must* be done, if we ever expect Forgiveness at the Hands of *God*. It is absolutely required as an express Condition, so that there is a Necessity of working ourselves up to this charitable Temper, and such a Principle of universal Love within us, as will make no Exceptions, but equally and constantly exert itself towards *Enemies* and *Friends*. Now, this Principle can never be ac-

4

quired

quired and implanted in our Breasts without the Practice of *Prayer*, and for two Reasons. For, first, *Prayer* disposes us to that excellent Frame of Spirit. It is the Corruption of our Flesh, and the Sensuality of our Nature, which cause Repentment, and a Desire of Revenge; and, therefore, when this Principle is weakened, the contrary gathers Strength. When our Nature is *spiritualiz'd*, those evil Affections cease. Now, *Prayer*, as I have observed already, is the only Way by which we can *refine* our Nature, draw off the Dregs of original Sin, purge it from its Dross, and make it more like *God*, of an *angelic* Kind. In the Exercise of *Prayer*, we bewail our own *Enmity to God*; we beg *Him* to *pardon*, and *love* us who were, and are still, in some measure his Enemies; *Prayer*, therefore, has a *natural Tendency* to soften our Hearts, and dispose us to grant That Forgiveness, of which we, ourselves, stand so much in need. For, what can more *naturally tend* to make us ready to forgive others, than a frequent Acknowledgement of our own Offences against God? Or, how can we be extreme to mark what is amiss in our *Brother*, when, by *daily Prayer*, we are constantly reminded of our own Sinfulness? Shall we dare to be inexorable, or to meditate Revenge, when we acknowledge that we are Criminals ourselves, and, perhaps, *greater Criminals upon the whole*, tho' less culpable in particular Articles: *Prayer*, therefore, in the *natural Effects* of it, will help to make us of a more candid, and forgiving Temper; and, if we do  
not

not *feel* these Effects in the Performance of it; it is because we do not pray with *Sincerity*.

But *Prayer* is not only necessary in some particular *Parts* of Religion, but *all* Religion, in *general*, depends upon it; which will appear abundantly plain if we consider—1. That no Man whatsoever *can* be good *without* Prayer.—2. That a Man will necessarily grow bad if he *neglects* it, and his Neglect be *wilful*—3. That no Man can long *continue* bad that takes due Care in praying to God.

1<sup>st</sup>, I say, no Man whatsoever can be good *without* Prayer, and that for two Reasons.—*First*, because, as I observed before, the Consideration of God's Attributes, his Omnipresence, Omnipotence, Omniscience, Purity, &c. are the greatest Checks to sinful Inclinations. For, what Person, of common Sense, that gives himself Leisure for a sober Thought, can dare to be very wicked in the Company, and before the Face, of that great God, who sees, and hates, what he does, and will assuredly punish him for it! Reflections upon these divine Attributes must unavoidably damp a Sinner, and deaden his irregular Passions, unless he be arrived to such a consummate Pitch of Impudence that he *cares* not for God; or, with the Psalmist's Fool, says in *his Heart*, *there is no God*, tho' he would be *thought* to acknowledge his Existence and Government. Now, he that does *not* pray, does most certainly lose the best Opportunity for serious Consideration upon God's Nature, because he omits that Action, in the due Performance of  
which

which a Man cannot *but* have the most intense Contemplation of the Deity; and, therefore, we have all imaginable Reason to believe that those who omit their *Prayers* do seldom find themselves at leisure, or disposed, for serious Meditation on these Subjects; consequently, all such Persons must want that Check which thinking on God's Attributes must give them. How, then, is it possible for them to be *Religious* and *Virtuous*? To attain the *End* without the Use of the necessary *Means*? *Nature* is very corrupt and weak, *Temptations* are very numerous and strong; evil Spirits are very cunning and active, and able to give *Temptations* an additional Force: And *can* Man then, or *will* he resist *Temptations*, notwithstanding their natural Strength, aided by the grand Enemy, while he neglects the proper Means of Resistance? No. He *will*, and *must*, be gradually carried down the Stream of Corruption, into an Ocean of Sin and Wickedness.

2dly, No Man can, in any measure, be good without God's Grace assisting him, the very weakest of our Inclinations being too strong for our *natural* Abilities to conquer. *Heaven* must be called into our Defence, or else we must yield ourselves Captives. This is the express Doctrine of the *Gospel*; this is the Language of our *Articles*, and *Liturgy*; this is a Truth acknowledged by *all Christians*. But, how, can the Assistance of God's Grace be obtained without *Prayer*, because we cannot expect it without *asking* for it? This is another Truth as clearly

laid down by *Scripture*, and our *Church*, and as universally assented to. God promises Grace. Says he, *ask and ye shall have*; which carries an *Implication* as strong as the most *positive Assertion*, that *without asking*, God will not give it us: From whence it follows, that without *Prayer* it is impossible for a Man to be a good CHRISTIAN.

The next Assertion that I laid down is this, *i. e.* That, as a Man grows in Grace by his constant Attendance on *Prayer*, and his due Performance of that Duty, so in Proportion as he *neglects* to pray, or prays in an undue Manner, he will gradually *decline* in *Religion* and *Virtue*. This is evident from the Nature of Things. As *bad Habits*, unless restrained, will grow stronger and stronger by Exercise; so good ones, without constant Exercise, and continual Supplies to forward their Growth, will daily grow weaker and weaker. Now, as has been shewn, these fresh Supplies of Grace cannot be obtained without *daily praying* for Them; and, consequently, he that does not regularly and duly perform the Duty of *Prayer*, which is the most nourishing Food of the Soul, does, as I may say, *starve* it, and thereby weaken its spiritual Strength; his Virtues languish, and at last for want of Recruits and Assistance will expire; he returns into his natural State of Aversion to *God*, and *Goodness*, and, perhaps, *rests* there without so much as attempting to recover himself. It is possible, I confess, that a Man who *habitually* neglects his Prayers, may not be so debauched as to be *notoriously*



*zoriously* wicked, and guilty of the most scandalous Enormities ; such as habitual Drunkenness, and Whoredom ; Swearing, Cursing, and Damning himself and his Neighbours (tho' in This Case, he cannot answer for himself, that he shall not, by degrees, be led into Them ;) yet, without such an *extraordinary* Degree of God's Grace, as no Man who has so long neglected to ask for it, has any good Reason to expect, he must be void of *all Religion*, notwithstanding, and in a State of the most imminent Danger. There are many Persons whom *God*, for *wise* and *good* Reasons, does not *suffer* to be tempted ; or the *Devil*, for *malicious* Reasons, *will not* tempt them to be guilty of such *outrageous* Wickedness. *God* restrains, because he will not suffer them to do so much Mischief by their *Examples* ; the *Devil* may not use all his Power, in hopes, by That Means, to be able the more effectually to ruin others by a less notorious, and scandalous Degree of Impiety : Such Persons, tho' not arrived to the highest Pitch of *Iniquity*, do, notwithstanding, want every, the *smallest* Grain of *Religion* ; tho' They have not so much *actual* *Wickedness*, They have every whit as little *Goodness*, as the most debauched *Atheists*. Nay, many Persons make a decent Appearance in the World, and pass for *tolerably good* People, who, nevertheless, are utterly destitute of all *true Godliness*. For, what is true Godliness ? It is not a *tolerable Outside* ; it does not consist in abstaining from the *worst of Crimes* ; it is not *mere Sobriety*, or *Chastity*, or any such *outward* Thing ;

it is an *inward Disposition* of the *Heart*; it is a *fixt*, a *steady*, a *quick* and *active Desire*, to the utmost of our *Power*, to conform ourselves to the *Likeness* of *God's Nature*, and to observe all his *Commands*; it is a *living Principle* that will exert itself upon all proper *Occasions*; it is *That* whereby we take *delight* in *spiritual Things*, and impatiently *covet* after them; and, like holy *David*, *long* and *pant* after *God*. *This* is *Godliness*, *This* is being truly *Religious*; and thus must *we* endeavour to be if ever we expect to associate with just *Men* made perfect in *Heaven*: Before we can be qualify'd for *their Acquaintance*, or *their Employments*, we must resemble *Them* in their *Sentiments* and *Dispositions*; before we can be capable of *seeing God*, we must be *Holy even as he his Holy*. And can such *Sentiments* and *Dispositions*, as these, be *acquired*, or *preserved*, without *Prayer*? Can any one *continue* to *delight* in *God* without *conversing* with him? Can any one love *Heaven* above all *Things* who neglects an *Acquaintance* with *That God*, whose immediate *Presence* *makes Heaven* to be what it is? A *Man* may become an *Atheist* for want of *praying*, but, I am sure, he cannot be *truly holy* without *praying*; for, no sooner does he *cease* to *pray*, but his *Piety* lessens of course; his *Love* of *God* is diminished, and his *Religion* moulders away and grows feeble, faints, and dies.

3dly, No *Man* can long continue in a *State* of *deliberate*, *wilful Sin*, who *continually prays*: I do not mean the *formal Act* of *Prayer*, but *attentive* and *servent Prayer*. As to the proper  
*Manner*

*Manner* of performing This great Duty, I shall consider it more at large in another Part of This Discourse. At present, I will only suppose a Man to believe that there is such a Being as he professes in his Prayers to believe; That God is infinitely Pure and Holy; that, in consequence of his own Nature, he must be a determined Enemy to all Vice, and will punish it. Let us, then, suppose that *such* a Man (for as to *Infidels*, or Persons who make no Use of their *Understanding*, and act without *meaning* any thing by what They do, They are quite out of the Question) lives in the *Habit* of any *known* Sin, or *frequently* lapses into *single* Acts of gross Immorality, and, yet, daily, in a most solemn Manner, falls upon his Knees before God, acknowledges his Guilt and Folly, and the *Reasonableness* of God's Laws; *humbly* and *sorrowfully* asks Pardon, and promises *Amendment*: Is it possible for him long to continue in such a Contrast of *daily Confession*, and *deliberate* Sin? No. He *must* reform, or leave off *Praying*. Put the Case of an undutiful *Child*, Day after Day, acknowledging his Fault to an *indulgent*, but *wise* Father, who, he knows, will gladly receive him into Favour if he shews the Sincerity of his Repentance, by an actual Amendment, but punish him with the greater Severity for *continuing* in his Disobedience, after so many repeated Acknowledgements and Promises. Would any one, that is not a *Madman*, or an *Idiot*, be able long to act such a *Part*? It is *impossible*, utterly impossible. He would *shew* that he was in *earnest*, or be

*afraid*, and *ashamed* to appear before his Father any more. The Case between our *heavenly* Father and *us* is much stronger. *His* Laws being more righteous, they are better fitted to create *Shame* in *wilful* Offenders; *he* knows, more particularly, all the aggravating Circumstances of our Guilt; his *Holiness* must give him a stronger Detestation of it; his *Power* enables him to punish with more Severity; his *Immutability* leaves no room to hope for Pardon without a *Change* in *us*. A Man, therefore, who *daily* confesses his Sins *must* be so far sincere as to *resolve* upon a Reformation, and a *strong* Resolution, aided by God's Grace, (which he will certainly have if he humbly and importunately asks for it) will enable him so far to put his good Resolutions in Practice, as not *wilfully* to *continue* in the *Habit* of any *known* Sin, or *frequently* to fall into *occasional* Acts of *very* gross Sins. I apprehend This to be so very clear a Case that it needs no farther *Inlargement*; and with every sincere Reader it needs no farther Inforcement: But, for a farther Encouragement to practise this Duty of *Prayer*, I shall shew how *acceptable* it is to *God*, and how *effectual* we may expect it to be to *ourselves*, from *Declarations*, and *Examples* recorded in Holy Scripture. I have already shewn what a *natural* Tendency there is in *Prayer* to make us *religious* and *virtuous*, in Concurrence with the Grace of God assisting us; this next Chapter will encourage us to *expect* God's Grace and Favour in Consequence of our sincere and hearty Prayers.

## C H A P. VI.

*Upon this Head there are three Things proper to be observed :*

- I. **T**HAT God, in his holy Word, hath made the most exprefs Promises that he will hear the Prayers of good *Christians*.
- II. That he hath most remarkably made good these Promises, as appears by Variety of *Instances*.
- III. That he hath declared that our *Prayers* are so necessary towards the Attainment of the good Things which we want, that without praying for them we shall not have them.

I. God hath given the most exprefs Declarations of his Readiness to answer our Prayers. The Psalmist saith, " The Lord is nigh unto all  
 " them that call upon him in Truth ; he will  
 " fulfil the Desires of those that fear him ; he  
 " also will hear their Cry and help them." Again, " The Eyes of the Lord are over the  
 " Righteous, and his Ears are open to their  
 " Prayers." Again, he is stiled, " A God that  
 " heareth Prayers." Again, he invites us to call upon him, promising Deliverance upon our Application to him ; " Call upon me in the Time  
 " of Trouble, and I will deliver thee." These and many other Passages, to the like purpose, we find in the *Old Testament*, and the *New* is as full of Them. Our Saviour says to his Apostles, " Whatsoever ye shall ask in my Name

“ *that* will I do.” Repeating it, “ If ye shall ask any thing in my Name I will do it.” Again, “ Ask and it shall be given you, &c. “ for every one that asketh receiveth, &c.” There are many other Declarations to the same Purpose, but these are sufficient to prove the Acceptableness and Efficacy of *Prayer*; and they are confirmed by many *Examples* and Instances of it. Among others we have the following very remarkable ones:

The Prayer of *Moses* quenched a devouring Fire.

The Prayer of *Elias* brought down Fire from Heaven.

The Prayer of *Elisha* restored a dead Man to Life.

The Prayer of King *Hezekiah* slew 185000 of the *Assyrians* in one Night.

The Prayer of *David* stopped the destroying Angel when his Hand was lifted up to destroy *Jerusalem*.

The Prayer of *Jonah* delivered him out of the Fish's Belly.

What a mighty Force the Scriptures attribute to *Prayer*, we may read in the History of the Battle between the *Israelites*, and the *Amalekites*; how the *former* prevailed as long as *Moses's* Hands were lifted up in *Prayer*, and the *latter* when he let Them fall; another we have in the Story of *Jacob* wrestling with the *Angel*, and prevailing by the Force of his *praying* for a *Blessing*. By the same Means *Moses* prevented the Destruction of the *Israelites*, when God was going

going to blot out their Name from under Heaven, for making the golden Calf. If it be said that these Examples signify nothing to us, who live at a Time when no Miracles can be expected, it may justly be answered, that they signify a good deal, because, from such *miraculous* Instances of the Effects of *Prayer*, we may draw a good Argument of its great Efficacy, at all Times, to the End of the World: For, if in those Ages *Prayer* was so prevalent as to move God to leave the usual Methods of his Providence, and to do Violence to the stated Order of Things, Have we not Reason to believe that he will answer those Prayers which require no such *extraordinary* Interposal, but fall within the Reach of the common Course of his Government?

3dly, For the farther Proof of the Efficacy of *Prayer*, it ought to be considered, that the Scriptures have declared it to be so necessary towards the Attainment of such Things as we want, that if we do not pray for them we shall not have them. This is evident from St. *James*, who says, “Ye lust and have not, ye kill and desire to have, and cannot obtain, because ye *ask* not.” What can be plainer?

And now, Reader, whatever you be; whether Learned, or Unlearned; whether Rich, or Poor; in the Ebb of Adversity, or the Flood of Prosperity; whether in a low, or in the most exalted Station; let me crave your Patience while I briefly *recapitulate* what has been said upon this important, solemn Subject. *Prayer* has a *natural* Tendency to make us Religious and Virtuous;

Virtuous ; it is recommended by the concurrent Opinion and Practice of all Ages, and Nations, of the most eminent and improved Persons, recorded in *Scripture* ; *Prophets*, *Apostles*, and even our *blessed Saviour himself*, that great *Exemplar* after which all CHRISTIANS are obliged to copy. It has the Sanction of the most positive *Precepts* from *God*, with an Assurance that our Prayers are a most acceptable Service : There are Variety of *Instances* and *Examples* of this in *Scripture* ; it not only has a Tendency to improve us in *Religion* and *Virtue*, but it is so *necessary* towards our Improvement, that it is impossible to be *truly* Religious and Virtuous without it, or long to *continue* in a State of *habitual* Wickedness, or often to commit gross Sins, while we *habituate* ourselves to the Practice of it : It is an Exercise, in *its Nature*, the most delightful, the most comfortable, and the most honourable ; nothing is so well fitted to make us easy and happy in all Circumstances of Life, by regulating all our disorderly Passions, and creating a perpetual Tranquillity and Serenity of Mind : It is, moreover, absolutely necessary towards qualifying ourselves for the Society, and Employment of the Inhabitants of *Heaven*, where all *Christians* expect to live for ever. I make no *declamatory* Address to your *Passions*, but a *cool* Appeal to *sober Reason*, and *common Sense*. If these things be so (and that they are, is most certainly true) what can we think of the *trifling Indifferency* with which a great Part of Mankind treat this Duty ? If this Book should happen to  
fall



fall into the Hands of any such unthinking Wretches, I heartily beg of God, that, thro' his assisting Grace, it may awaken them into a more serious Consideration of an Affair that deserves their closest Attention.

Having spoken thus largely of the Effects of Prayer in general, I shall now distinctly consider the particular Advantages *peculiar* to *private* and *publick* Prayer.

## C H A P VII.

*The Duty and Advantages PECULIAR to private and publick Prayer, distinctly considered.*

I. **L**ET us consider what *peculiar* Circumstances of Advantage attend *private* Prayer. One very considerable one is this, it gives us an Opportunity of knowing the *Sincerity* of our Hearts. The Heart of Man is so treacherous that he often deceives *himself*, as well as the World, and makes himself believe that he is acting upon a *religious* Motive, while he is influenced by Views of *Interest*, or a Principle of *Vain-Glory*: Like the *Pharisees* of old, he prays in *Publick* that he *may be seen of Men*, out of Custom, Decency, or some worldly Motive; and this Observation more particularly concerns those whose *Stations* compel them to attend publick Worship; such as Students at the *Universities*, and Persons belonging to *Cathedrals*. And there

there is still more Reason to suspect some Principle of this Sort, when a Person does not regularly attend *publick* Worship, as often as he has an Opportunity, but neglects it upon frivolous Pretences. Every *true* Principle is *uniform*, and will always operate regularly, and equally, whenever it is not necessarily obstructed; if *Religion* carries a Man to Church at *one* time, the same Motive will absurdly have the same Effect at *any other* Opportunity, unless he be hindered by want of *Health*, some Work of *Necessity*, or *Charity*: If he usually attends the Service on *Sunday-Mornings*, and as usually absents himself in the *Afternoon*; or, if he be constant both Parts of the *Sunday*, and never, or very seldom, attends the Prayers on the *Week-Day* when he has a fitting Opportunity: In all these Cases the Man imposes upon himself, if he fancies that when he goes to *Church* he goes upon a *genuine, unadulterated* Principle of *Religion*. But, when we address ourselves to God in our *Closets*, where no Eye, but that of *God*. can see what we are doing, *then* we may be assured that we act upon a sincere Sense of *Duty*, without any *Mixture* of *worldly* Views; for this Reason it was that our Saviour directs us to shut out the Observation of all other Witnesses of our Devotions, that we may pray to our Father who seeth in *secret*, and will reward us *openly*: And, therefore, whoever neglects to worship God in his *Closet*, does not worship him at *Church* upon a *true Sense* of *Religion*, tho' he *may* have some *slight* and *imperfect* Notions of his Obligations; I say, he can have no  
well

well grounded Conviction of his Duty upon rational Evidence. It was this *private* Prayer in which our Lord so much delighted; a *Mountain*, a *Desart*, or a *Garden*, were the Places which he chose for such Prayers; and that he might be still more secret, he made choice of such Times when the Darkness of the Night covered him from Observation; *a great while before Day he went out and departed into a solitary Place, and there prayed*; at another Time, *he continued all Night in Prayer to God*; and his *Example* must be as infallible as his *Word*, and binds us as strongly to the Use of *private* Prayer, tho' our Strength and Spirits will not enable us to continue so long in Prayer at any one Time; nor can we have the like urgent Occasion, or Opportunity, consistently with our present State, and Condition.

2. *Private* Worship has this particular Advantage attending it, that it is a plainer Testimony of our Belief of God's *Omniscience*, than *publick* Devotions, this being the *only* Foundation of our *secret* Addresses: And, as the Worship of God in *secret* is founded upon a Belief of God's *Omniscience*, and can have *no other* Support, so the constant Exercise of it is naturally apt to make the Sense of his *Omniscience* always lively in our Minds; than which nothing can be a more probable Means of restraining us from all Sorts of Sins, more especially those Sins which Men are, of all others, the most liable to be tempted to; I mean, *secret* Sins.

3. Another great Advantage *peculiar* to *private* Prayer is this, That we may be more *particular*, than it is possible to be in *publick* Prayer, which can be adapted only to the *general* State of Mankind ; we are, all of us, equally God's *Creatures*, and, therefore, it is fit that as many of us as can conveniently assemble together should *unite* in acknowledging him to be our *common Father* ; every one of us are equally supported by him, and, therefore, we ought to *join* in thanking him for the Mercies and Blessings which, in *common*, we receive from him. We are, all, *Sinners*, and *publick* Sinners, and, therefore, it is meet that we should *publickly*, and *jointly*, confess our sinful State : We have a great many *common Wants* which we *may*, and *should*, agree to request of him : But, every one is daily receiving *particular Blessings* ; every one has *particular Wants* ; every one is guilty of *private* Sins, and subject to *particular Temptations* : Now, it is impossible that all these *particular* Circumstances, *peculiar* to each of us, should be made the Subject of our *publick* Devotions, and, therefore, we can offer these Prayers *only* in our *private Closets*, where each one may adapt them to his *own* Case ; so that, if we attend the *publick* Service of the *Church* ever so constantly, there will be still a Necessity for *daily, private*, Devotions, in order to confess those Sins which we *committed* in *private*, to thank God for those *particular* Blessings which we have received, besides those which we enjoy in *common* with other People ; and thus it is  
with

with regard to every *other* Part of *Prayer*; we are as much obliged to make those things, which relate to *ourselves*, ONLY, the Subject of our *private* Addresses to God, as we are to *join* in those Parts which concern *all* Mankind *equally*. And being thus *particular* in our Acknowledgements, either of *Mercies*, and *Blessings*, or *Sins*, it must have a much stronger Effect upon our Minds than resting in *Generals*. Let us examine a little how this Matter stands: Suppose a Person does me a *singular* Favour, that is of very great Service to me, and such as he does not *usually* bestow upon his Neighbours, and Acquaintance, in the common Intercourse of Life. Well; I take an Opportunity of *joining* with *many others*, who are under Obligations to him for the *common* Offices of Kindness which he has shewn to us *all*, without taking a *private* Opportunity to thank him, *particularly*, for the *uncommon* Kindness which he has shewn to *me*, on such an Occasion. This, indeed, would be *something*, but not *enough* to satisfy my *singular* Obligations, and to dispose me to entertain such a strong Sense of Gratitude as will produce a suitable Return of Behaviour in me: But, let us suppose that I go directly to him, and *privately* tell him, what a strong Sense I have of this *extraordinary* Instance of his Friendship to me, expatiating upon the Circumstances that heighten the Obligation, assuring him what very great Service it did me, how unworthy I was of it, and how studious I shall always be, to shew my Gratitude by a respectful, and obliging, Behaviour.

Behaviour. I ask, now, any sober Person living, whether this *particular* Acknowledgement in *private* be not more effectual than a *general* one, *in company* with others, where we only declare that he has been very kind to *us all*; whether my Friend would not expect it from me; and whether it would not more strongly excite Gratitude in me, and make me the more careful to please him? Or, if I have *privately* done a *particular* Injury to this very kind Friend, or *endeavoured*, or *intended*, to do it, and it, some way, or other, comes to his Knowledge, should I only go along with *several others*, who have, likewise, injured, or affronted him, where I could have no Opportunity of mentioning *my particular* Offence, but only *join* with *them* in owning our *common* Offences, and asking his Pardon: Would he think this a sufficient Satisfaction? Or would this *general* Confession be equally efficacious towards creating in my Mind a proper Sense of Shame, and Sorrow, and a Resolution to behave better for the future? I say, would this have the same Effect as if I went by myself, laid open all the aggravating Circumstances of my Guilt, and humbled myself in Words, and Gestures, that may be more suitable than such as I could decently use in *publick*, where the Publick are ignorant of the Fact, and of the Nature and Circumstances of it, and ought to be *kept* ignorant? I think this is so obvious a Case, that I may trust the most ordinary Understanding with the Determination of it, and leave him to draw the plain Comparison between this Case,

and that of the *singular Mercies* which we receive from God, and our *particular Offences* committed against Him. This Method I would advise to be put in practice in the following Manner: To give an habitual Attention to our Thoughts, and Words, and Actions. This may be done in any Station of Life whatsoever. There may be some Difficulty in doing it, especially at first, but by degrees it will grow more and more easy. This will bring us acquainted with ourselves, naturally increase our Watchfulness, and be the Means of *preventing* Sins, as well as of reclaiming us from the *Repetition* of them. Whenever we catch ourselves at a Fault, if it be the Result of *natural Infirmity*, it may be sufficient for such Escapes, if we immediately lift up our *Minds* to God (which may be done in *Company*) in a *penitential Ejaculation*. If the Fault be more *deliberate* and *wilful*, or the *Repetition* of one that we have often committed, we should not only lift our Minds to God at that Instant, but lay it up carefully in our *Memories*, and before we go to Bed weigh the Circumstances of it, and make a particular and solemn Acknowledgment of it. I add farther, that in the Case of *very notorious* Sins, such as that of *David's*, or an Escape from imminent Danger of our Lives, we should not content ourselves with a single Acknowledgment, but make it an Article in our daily Prayers in our *Closets*. I would recommend the same Method in regard to *Temptations*. Every one has something in his *Constitution*, or *Situation*, that subjects him to *parti-*

cular Temptations, and, therefore, in our *Closets*, we should be *particular* in begging God's Grace to inable us to resist them. A Person naturally inclin'd to *Lasciviousness*, should daily pray for *Cbaſtity*; the *Proud*, for *Humility*; the *Cholerick*, for *Meekneſs*, &c. The ſame Courſe ſhould be taken in reſpect to ſuch Sins as we are in moſt danger of from our *Circumſtances* in Life. The *Rich* ſhould pray, *particularly*, againſt the *natural* and *uſual* Conſequences of Riches upon the Minds and Manners of Men, and for a Diſpoſition to make a good uſe of them. Perſons, in the more *elevated* Stations of Life, and intruſted with Power and Influence, are ſubject to more and greater Temptations, either to *abuse* their Trust, or to *neglect* the due Diſcharge of it; *They* ſtand in need of more Watchfulneſs, and more Aſſiſtance from God's Grace; and, therefore, it is incumbent upon them to aſk, *particularly*, for thoſe Virtues which are neceſſary to the Diſcharge of their great Trust; and, above all, that God would give them a *true, publick* Spirit, an inflamed Zeal for the Honour of God, the Intereſt of his Religion, and the Good of Mankind; ſuch a Zeal as may guard them from *low* and *mean* Views; and I call *all* Views low and mean, which are inconſiſtent with thoſe great ones that I have juſt now mentioned. I chuſe not to be more particular in explaining myſelf: Thoſe honeſt Readers who are diſpoſed to make a good Uſe of a Hint, will take it, the reſt will only be provok'd to Reſentment. But before I quit this Head, I muſt deſire the Rea-



der to apply what I have said concerning Men's *particular Sins*, and *Temptations*, to Sins of *Omission*, which I apprehend to be much more numerous than those of *Commission*, because they are more likely to escape our Notice, and, consequently, *we* more likely to lapse into them.

Another Advantage I shall barely mention, because it requires no Inlargement upon it: Every one has *particular Friends* and *Benefactors*, whom a generous and affectionate Mind would be glad, in a *particular Manner*, to recommend to the Blessing of God; which can be done *only* in our *private Devotions*, since no *Common-Prayer* can descend to *such Particulars*.

And thus having mentioned the principal Advantages *peculiar* to *private Prayer*, I shall subjoin a necessary Caution. Our blessed Saviour has directed us to make our *private Devotions* as *secret* as possible; but this Direction must not be followed to the *Neglect* of such Prayers. *As far* as possible we should make them *secret*, but *make* them we *must*, though we should have no Opportunity of retiring from the Notice of every human Eye. Such Circumstances may, and often do, happen; and, in these Cases, it will be no pharisaical Ostentation, if we suffer others to see us upon our Knees addressing ourselves to God, but a necessary Piece of Justice to *Religion*, and to *ourselves*; but, then, what passes between God and us may be *secret*; for we need not speak so as to be heard by any one; or we may only direct our *Minds* to God without speaking at all.

These are the *principal* Advantages *peculiar* to *private* Prayer: As to those which are *peculiar* to *publick* Prayer, I shall take the Liberty of setting them forth in a Transcript from that most excellent Preacher and sound Divine, as well as pious *Christian*, Archbishop *Sharp*, Vol. 4. p. 157. “ It is the Fault of a great many, and  
 “ even of some that have otherwise an hearty  
 “ Sense of Religion, that they have not *that*  
 “ Esteem and Value for the *publick* Worship of  
 “ God, that, in the Nature of Things, it doth  
 “ call for. If they do but say their Prayers de-  
 “ voutly in their *Closets*, (and I would to God  
 “ that all Persons did that) they think they have  
 “ done enough; all that is needful for the Dis-  
 “ charge of that Part of their Duty which con-  
 “ cerns the *Worship* of God. The *Church* Prayers,  
 “ and, likewise, Prayers in their *Families*, they  
 “ can well enough spare. And tho’ they do,  
 “ perhaps, now and then attend the publick  
 “ Worship, yet it is not so much for the Sake  
 “ of the *Prayers*, as for the Curiosity of hearing  
 “ a Sermon; or, it may be, for the avoiding the  
 “ Scandal that their Absence at such Times  
 “ would bring upon them. But, certainly, this  
 “ is far from being a right Notion of the Wor-  
 “ ship of God; so far from it, that I must say  
 “ it is a very absurd one. We do own, that to  
 “ serve God in *private*, is a necessary Duty;  
 “ nay, so necessary, that there is no living an  
 “ holy *Christian* Life without it. We own,  
 “ likewise, that as the Thing is infinitely rea-  
 “ sonable in itself, so it is attended with Advan-  
 “ tages

“ tages of various Sorts (some of which I have  
 “ mentioned); but, then, we say, that *publick*  
 “ Prayer, joining with our Brethren in the Ser-  
 “ vice of God, whether it be at *Church*, or in  
 “ our own *Families*, must needs have the Pre-  
 “ eminence in abundance of Respects. Give  
 “ me leave to name a few of them. Would  
 “ we take the readiest Course to have our Prayers  
 “ effectual, in order to obtain from God what  
 “ we pray for? Why, certainly, then, we must  
 “ pray with *other* devout People that come to-  
 “ gether to obtain the same thing that *we* de-  
 “ sire. In common Reason one would think,  
 “ that the *united* Force of a *Number* joining to-  
 “ gether to make a Request, should have more  
 “ Power than a Petition from a *single* Person,  
 “ whoever he be that is addressed. But, we  
 “ have more cause to think so with reference to  
 “ those Prayers that we make to *God* in *publick*,  
 “ *Christ Jesus* having given us his Promise, that  
 “ *wherever two or three of us are gathered toge-*  
 “ *ther in his Name, there he will be in the midst*  
 “ *of us.* Not but that He will be present to  
 “ every devout Person that prays as he should  
 “ do; but the Promise is more expresse to those  
 “ who join their Prayers together. Nay, our  
 “ Saviour, even when the Occasion led Him to  
 “ discourse of *private* Prayer, such as ought to  
 “ be performed in the *Closet*, yet, being to give  
 “ a *Form* of Prayer, He delivers it in such  
 “ Words as are most proper to be used in a  
 “ *Congregation*, speaking in the plural Number,

“ *Our Father which art in Heaven, &c.* intimating hereby, that it was his Design that *all his*  
 “ Disciples should *join* together in Prayer.—  
 “ But this is not all.—Do we think it our Duty  
 “ to pay *Honour* to God in our Devotions, to  
 “ give *Him* the Glory that is due unto His  
 “ Name? Why, certainly, this is never *so pro-*  
 “ *perly* done, as when we *assemble* together with  
 “ our *Fellow-Christians*, to express our Depen-  
 “ dence upon Him, and to set forth his Praise.  
 “ In true Speaking, to give *Honour* and *Glory*  
 “ to God, is *publishing* to *others* the Sense we  
 “ have of his adorable Perfections, of his infinite  
 “ Kindness and Beneficence, and of the conti-  
 “ nual Need we stand in of his Bounty; but  
 “ this can be done no way so effectually, as by  
 “ *joining* in the Expression of those Things with  
 “ the religious Assemblies of our Brethren. Nor,  
 “ indeed, can we be more properly said to *serve*  
 “ God by our Devotions in *private*, than we  
 “ can be said to *honour* Him; and yet, all of us  
 “ think there is some Service due from us to  
 “ *God*; and we think, likewise, that we serve  
 “ Him by our *Prayers*. This is so common  
 “ and obvious a Notion, that if a Man does but  
 “ hear the *Service* of *God* mentioned, he is na-  
 “ turally apt to apply that Word to *praying* to,  
 “ and *worshipping* Him, as looking upon That  
 “ as the principal Part of the *Service* which we  
 “ owe Him. Why, this is true; but praying  
 “ to God in *private*, is doing Him no *Service*,  
 “ in the proper Sense of the Word; there we  
 “ rather

“ rather serve *ourselves* than *God Almighty* \*.  
 “ To *serve* one, is properly to promote the *In-*  
 “ *terest* of that Person whom we pretend to  
 “ *serve*; to do his Business with all those among  
 “ whom we are employ’d. This now is truly  
 “ and properly done in respect to *God*, when  
 “ we resort to the *publick Assemblies* to pay our  
 “ Devotions and Acknowledgements to Him;  
 “ for, by that means, we really do *our* Part, that  
 “ *all* the World should honour, and fear, and  
 “ worship God, as well as ourselves; nay, and  
 “ we contribute a great deal to the keeping up  
 “ a Sense of Religion among *Men*, which is the  
 “ truest Service that we can pay to *God*; for,  
 “ were it not for the *publick* stated Meetings for  
 “ the Worship of God, and instructing of Men  
 “ there in the true Religion, not only the *Spirit*  
 “ of *Christianity*, but the very *Face* of it, would  
 “ be in danger to be lost in the World.—But,  
 “ farther—That I may yet more recommend to  
 “ you the Use of *publick* Prayer, let me desire  
 “ you to consider this: Is it reasonable to wor-  
 “ ship God in a Way most suitable to *our Na-*  
 “ *ture*? If so, then we must certainly think  
 “ ourselves obliged to *assemble together* for the  
 “ celebrating his Praises, and putting up our  
 H 4 “ Petitions

\* What his Grace observes here, must be understood in a  
*qualified* Sense, or it is not true. We *serve ourselves* more by  
*publick*, than *private* Prayer; and we serve God no more by  
*publick* than *private* Prayer. That is, *we* are more *benefitted* by  
 the *former*, than the *latter*; and, strictly speaking, God cannot  
 be benefitted by *either*. All the Duties, that we pay *immedi-*  
*ately* to Him, are appointed for the Sake of *us, Men*; who alone  
 can receive any Advantage from them, God being incapable of  
 receiving any additional Happiness from his *Creatures*.

“ Petitions for the Things we stand in need of.  
 “ Man, by his own Nature, is a *sociable* Crea-  
 “ ture, and is so contrived, that, in order to the  
 “ serving his Necessities, he must join in *Society*  
 “ with others of his own Kind. And can it  
 “ be thought reasonable to have Society with  
 “ one another in all other Things pertaining to  
 “ Life, and yet to have no Society with one  
 “ another in Matters of *Religion*, which is cer-  
 “ tainly of higher Concernment than any *worldly*  
 “ Affairs whatsoever? Is it necessary to our  
 “ Happiness, that we should every Day com-  
 “ municate together in our *Businesses*, and in our  
 “ *Enjoyments*, and must we never communicate  
 “ together in owning the Author of our Society,  
 “ the Head of our Community, and paying our  
 “ Acknowledgments for the daily Benefits we  
 “ receive from Him? For what did God Al-  
 “ mighty give us *Speech*? Was it only for the  
 “ transacting our *temporal* Concerns one with  
 “ another? and not, at all, or not, *rather*, for  
 “ the setting forth the Praises of our Maker,  
 “ which is certainly the noblest Use to which it  
 “ can be put? And, yet, that End of our Speech  
 “ would be wholly lost, if it were supposed that  
 “ we were only to perform our Devotions in  
 “ *private*; for, *private* Devotions may be per-  
 “ formed by the *Mind*, without the use of the  
 “ *Tongue*.—Add to this, that the most, and the  
 “ greatest, Blessings which we every Day and  
 “ Hour enjoy, and do every Day and Hour  
 “ stand in need of, are *common* Benefits, in which  
 “ we all have a Share; such as the Air we  
 “ breathe

“ breathe in, the Food we eat, the Light, our  
 “ Peace, our Liberty; above all, the Advan-  
 “ tages of the Gospel, and the Promises of eter-  
 “ nal Salvation: These are *publick* and *common*  
 “ Blessings; and, therefore, is it not infinitely  
 “ reasonable that we should all *join* in *publick*  
 “ and *common* Assemblies, to offer up our Sa-  
 “ crifice of Praise to God for these Blessings,  
 “ and to implore the Continuance of them?—  
 “ Once more, and I have done with this Head;  
 “ have we ever seriously considered the Nature of  
 “ our *Religion*, and the Duties of our common  
 “ *Christianity*? If we have, we must needs look  
 “ upon ourselves to be indispensably obliged to  
 “ frequent the *publick* Assemblies that are ap-  
 “ pointed for the *Christian* Worship. It is a  
 “ very false Opinion that some People among  
 “ us have taken up, *viz.* That *Christianity* is  
 “ no more than a Sort of *refined Philosophy*, and  
 “ that *Christians* are but a *Set* of Men that have  
 “ truer Notions about divine Matters, and ought,  
 “ therefore, to live better than the rest of the  
 “ World: It is enough, according to this Ac-  
 “ count, to intitle a Man to the Name of a  
 “ *Christian*, that he believes the Doctrines of  
 “ *Jesus Christ*, and that he lives a *moral, virtu-*  
 “ *ous* Life, tho’ he exercises no Acts that ex-  
 “ press his *Relation* to that Body, or Society,  
 “ which we call the *Church*. But, certainly,  
 “ this is a great Mistake; for, when *Christ*  
 “ came to plant his Religion in the World, and,  
 “ by the means of that, to bring us to everlast-  
 “ ing Happiness, his Design was not only to  
 “ give

“ give us a *System of Doctrines* to be believed,  
 “ and *Precepts* to be practised, *separately*, by  
 “ every Person, without *relation* to one another;  
 “ but to mould and form all his Disciples into  
 “ *one common Body*, or *Society*; or, as we usually  
 “ express it, into one *Church*; and, in order  
 “ thereunto, he appointed that every one, who  
 “ would embrace his Religion, should be entered  
 “ into that *Church*, or *Society*, by *Baptism*; and,  
 “ when they are so entered, and made *Members*  
 “ of *one Body*, they should continue to exercise  
 “ all Acts of *Membership*, and *Communion* with  
 “ that Society; and that they might be the more  
 “ effectually obliged to this, he appointed that  
 “ the ordinary Means, or Conduits, or Chan-  
 “ nels, in which he would convey his Grace to  
 “ Believers, should be this exercise of *Communion*  
 “ with his Church, the joining in her *pub-  
 “ lick Prayers*, and *Sacraments*; so that if we  
 “ would partake of the divine Influences, which  
 “ *Christ* hath purchased, and without which we  
 “ cannot perform the necessary Terms of Sal-  
 “ vation, there is an absolute Necessity that we  
 “ should be *Members* of his *Church*: And, if  
 “ we be *Members* of his Church, there is a  
 “ Necessity, likewise, that we should perform  
 “ those Acts by which that Membership is ex-  
 “ pressed; and the chiefest of those Acts are, to  
 “ meet together for the Profession of our Faith  
 “ in *Christ*, for the worshipping God by *Prayer*,  
 “ and for receiving the Holy Sacrament.—Nay,  
 “ I may add farther, that *Christ* has so strictly  
 “ combined all his Disciples in a *Church*, or So-  
 “ ciety,



“ *ciety*, and so indispensably *tied* all that believe  
 “ in him to *join* in the *publick* Duties of Reli-  
 “ gion, as *Members* of that Society, that it is  
 “ in virtue of the *Relation* which we have to  
 “ *that Society*, and our Willingness to *join* in  
 “ those Duties, that GOD accepts even our *pri-*  
 “ *vate* Prayers; so that if we voluntarily cut  
 “ ourselves off from *Communion* with *Christ’s*  
 “ *Church*, and refuse to *join* with other *Christi-*  
 “ *ans*, we have no reasonable Grounds to expect  
 “ that God will have any Regard to the Prayers  
 “ that we put up in our *Closets*.—What I have  
 “ said, I hope, cannot fail of having sufficient  
 “ Force to convince reasonable People of the  
 “ great *Necessity* of attending the *publick* Service  
 “ of the *Church*, as often as we have an Op-  
 “ portunity; much less can it reasonably be  
 “ thought an *indifferent* Matter, whether we  
 “ attend it or not. No. If we have any Re-  
 “ gard to the Honour of God; if we have any  
 “ Regard to our own Benefit; if we have any  
 “ Regard to the Duties which either *natural*  
 “ *Religion*, or *Christianity*, requires from us,  
 “ we shall think ourselves obliged to be very  
 “ diligent and constant in attending the *publick*  
 “ *Service* of God; and, if our Circumstances  
 “ be such that, either we have not Opportunity  
 “ of resorting to it; or, if, having Opportuni-  
 “ ties, our other necessary Business will not al-  
 “ low us to attend it; yet, in that Case, these  
 “ Considerations will oblige us to take care that  
 “ the Worship of God be performed in *Fa-*  
 “ *milies*, where *Fathers* and *Masters* have Au-  
 “ thority

" authority to command their *Children* and *Ser-*  
 " *vants* to attend. If they can no oftener than  
 " *one* Day in the Week be present at the *pub-*  
 " *lick* Assemblies, yet, they should *every* Day  
 " in the Week *join* with the *Catholick* Church,  
 " in their *own* Families, in offering up the so-  
 " lemn Sacrifice of Prayer for themselves, and  
 " all others.—In this Case every Master of a  
 " Family is allowed to be a *Priest*; or, he may  
 " depute that Office to whom he pleaseth; but,  
 " if no care be taken of the Worship of God in  
 " Families, especially, where they have not an  
 " Opportunity of resorting to the *publick* Offices,  
 " I must confess, I think the Master of that  
 " Family has not much Sense of Religion, and  
 " has a severe Account to make for the Trust  
 " committed to him."

Thus speaketh this excellent Person: To what  
 has been said, I shall only add two short Observa-  
 tions, *1st*, That if the Point of religious Duty  
 were quite out of the Question, it would be their  
*Interest* with regard to *this* Life, to keep up a  
 Face of Religion in their Families, as it would  
 tend greatly to make their Children dutiful, and  
 their Servants faithful, by preserving a *Sense* of  
*Duty* amongst them, which is the only thing  
 that can secure to them a settled Esteem, and  
 Love, and Obedience; and, wherever this is  
 regularly done, the good Effects of it are very  
 visible in the Behaviour of the *whole* Family.  
*2dly*, That all People ought to beg a Blessing  
 upon their *set* Meals, and afterwards to return  
 Thanks for them: This is a Part of *Family-wor-*  
*ship,*

*ship*, a proper Acknowledgement of God's Providence, that we owe the Support of our Lives to his Bounty : This is so natural to every religious Person, and so proper a Means of preserving a due Sense of our constant Dependance upon God, that wherever I find this Practice neglected, I must take it for granted that they are, either very *ignorant*, or very *irreligious* in their Notions ; at least, that they have not a *true* Sense of Religion.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Concerning the Place of Prayer.*

**B**Y the *Place* of Prayer I mean, Places *appropriated* and *solemnly consecrated* for *publick* Prayer ; I hope I have sufficiently proved the Duty of *private* Prayer ; which may be very acceptably performed in *any* Place, neither *can* there be *any one* Place *appropriated*, much less *consecrated* for such Prayers, because they must often be put to *common* Uses ; the same may be said of *Family-prayer* ; and, as to *larger* Assemblies of *Christians meeting*, and *joining*, together in Prayer, if they have not the Opportunity of any *set* Place, no doubt, they may meet together in *any* Place which they can procure, occasionally, for that purpose ; and such Prayers, when properly offered, will be accepted ; or, if they can have the Conveniency of some *set* Place, which it may not be proper to *consecrate*, (which is very often the Case) such Places are *preferable*

to

to *any other* Place, *occasionally*, chosen for that purpose: But, what I mean to advance is this, that it is highly expedient, wherever they can be had, not only to *set apart*, or *appropriate*, particular Places for religious Worship, but *solemnly* to *consecrate*, and *devote*, them to the Worship of God, in such a manner that they shall for ever cease to be *ours* to put to any *other* Use: This is the true Notion of *holy* Places; in this Sense they are *God's House*; and, if they be, in a *particular* Manner, *God's House*, we have Reason to believe that he will *dwell*, or be *present* in those Places, in a manner in which he has not promised to be present in *other* Places that are *not* so *peculiarly given*, or *devoted*, to his Use. The *Philosopher*, full of his own vain Conceits, will scornfully ask whether *Consecration* alters the *Nature* of those Buildings, as the *Papists* affirm of the Consecration of the Elements of *Bread* and *Wine* at the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; to which impertinent Question we *Christians* may safely answer, No; and, yet, affirm that Prayers offered up to God in *such* Places may be more acceptable to *him*, and more profitable to *us*, than if the Places were *not* so solemnly *devoted* to that Use. We affirm, that nothing can be more natural and rational than this Notion. Let us put the Case of *Persons*, instead of *Places*, and every *Christian* Objector must be silent. The *Clergy* like the *Churches*, are *set apart* and *solemnly consecrated* for the *publick* Worship of God, to administer the *Sacraments*, and to offer up the *Prayers* of  
the

the Congregation ; this is the *Ordinance* of God: Now, these *wise* Objectors may as pertinently ask, whether the *Consecration* of a *Priest* alters the *Nature* of the Man, the *Nature* of the *Elements* in the *Sacraments*, or the *Nature* of the *Prayers* which they offer up at *Church* in the Name of the People ; and they may as well infer, from thence, with the *Quakers*, that the *Prayers* may be offered up, and the *Sacraments* administered, as *acceptably* to God, and as *effectually* to the People, by any body else as by a *Priest* : But, all this we deny upon the clearest Evidence ; the *Priest* is *God's especial Minister*, appointed, and *consecrated* for those Purposes ; and, therefore, unless we give up *Christianity*, and *common Sense*, we must suppose that God will pay a *particular Regard* to his own *Institution*. In like manner, as the *Priest* is *God's publick Minister*, the *Church* is *God's House*, solemnly devoted, or *consecrated*, to his Service, and *separated* from all other Uses whatsoever ; from whence we may justly conclude, that the *Prayers* offered up by his own *Minister*, in his own *House*, will be *particularly* acceptable, and effectual. This is the Sense, and the only Sense, in which the *omnipresent* God may be said to be *peculiarly* present in some Places above others, not by his *Essence*, (which must be *equally* in all Places) but by *singular Manifestations*, and *Communications*, of himself to Mankind : Now, that God has, in *this* Sense, been, all along, *peculiarly* present in *particular* Places, that such Places were called *his Presence*, and became the  
ordinary

ordinary standing Places of Worship, is the constant Doctrine of Scripture. I shall trace this Matter from the *Creation*, and give a brief History of it, as we find the several Instances recorded in the Bible.

The great Dean of St. Paul's, Dr. Sberlock, seems to have made a very probable Conjecture, *viz.* that even in *Paradise itself*, there was some *peculiar* Place where God most ordinarily appeared to our first Parents. For this Opinion he quotes *Gen. iii. 8.* where we read, that, when *Adam* and *Eve* had eaten the forbidden Fruit, "they  
 " heard the Voice of the *Lord God* (the eternal  
 " Word) walking in the Garden in the cool of  
 " the Evening, and Adam and his Wife hid  
 " themselves from the *Presence* of the Lord  
 " God, among the Trees of the Garden." Two things, I think, are clear from this Passage. *First*, That there was some *particular* Place in Paradise where God usually *met*, and *conversed* with them. *Secondly*, That there was some *external Appearance* accompanying his *Communications* in this Place, from which they fled, and endeavoured to hide themselves, among the *Trees* of the Garden. *Bishop Patrick* supposes this Appearance to have been more glorious and majestick than it had been at *other* Times; on this Occasion, he quotes the following Paraphrase of a *Jewish Commentator*; "They heard the  
 " Voice of the Word of the Lord, who ap-  
 " peared in very *glorious Clouds*, in *flaming Fire*,  
 " of such an amazing Brightness that they were  
 " not able to endure the Sight of it."

The next Instance is in the Account of *Cain* and *Abel's* offering their *Sacrifices*, which was an Act of *religious Worship*, and, no doubt, accompanied with some *Prayers*; see *Gen. iv. 3, 4.* The Observation of Bishop *Patrick* upon this Passage, is so pertinent to my present Purpose, that I shall cite it at large. “As there  
 “ were some solemn *Times* of making their devout Acknowledgments to God, so, I doubt  
 “ not, there were some *set Places*, where they met for that Purpose: For the original Word  
 “ *brought*, is never used about *private*, but *public* Sacrifices; and, therefore, I suppose that  
 “ they *brought* these Sacrifices to some *fixed*  
 “ Place, looking towards the *Schechinab*, or *glorious Presence* of God at the Entrance of the  
 “ Garden of *Eden*,” (as the *Jews* were afterwards ordered to look towards the *Temple* at *Jerusalem*, when they offered up their Prayers at a Distance from it) “from which *Adam* had  
 “ been expelled. For there being, no doubt, some *settled* Place, where they performed sacred Offices, it is most reasonable to think  
 “ that it had respect to the *Schechinab*. Where-  
 “ soever *That* appeared, *they* appeared *before*  
 “ God (as the Scripture speaks) because *there* he manifested his *special Presence*, which moved  
 “ them to go thither to worship him, to give him Thanks, or to *enquire of Him*.” From this *Presence* of the Lord, this *glorious Appearance*, which *Cain*, at the 14th Verse, calls the *Face of the Lord*, he was banished, and never afterwards enjoyed the Sight of it; and God with-  
 I drawing

drawing his *gracious Presence* from him, he was also forsaken by him, and put out of his special Protection. From thence he went into the Land of *Nod*, which was as much the Place of God's *essential Presence*, as that from which he was banished.

Let us now proceed to the History of *Abraham*, *Isaac*, and *Jacob*; from whence we not only learn, that in those Days they always had their *appropriate Places of Worship*, but that they pitched their Tents, and built their Altars, either in such Places as God directed them to, or where God appeared to them, and that these were the Places where God ordinarily received their Homage, and conversed with them. At the 12th ch. ver. 6, 7, we read that God appeared unto *Abraham* in the Place of *Sichem*, in the Plain of *Mamre*, and that there he built an Altar unto the Lord, who appeared to him. If we proceed in the History to the 13th ch. v. 4, we shall find that he returned hither again when he came out of *Egypt*; and that there, at the Place of the same Altar which he built at the first, he called on the Name of the Lord: So that the *Appearance of God to him in this Place*, had made it a *standing Place of Worship*. In this Place God appeared to him again, and renewed his Promise to him after the Departure of *Lot*. After this, by God's Command, *Abraham* removed his Tent, and dwelt in the Plain of *Mamre*, where he built an Altar to the Lord, **xiii. 18**. Here God frequently appeared to him, as we may see at large in the xvth, xviith, and xviiiith



xviiiith Chapters. In the same manner, when God appeared to *Isaac* at *Beersheba*, he built an Altar, and called upon the Name of the Lord, and took up his Abode there, as in a Place where God was *present*, xxvi. 24, 25. “ And “ the Lord appeared to him the same Night, “ and said, I am the God of *Abraham* thy Fa- “ ther, &c. And he builded an Altar there, “ and called upon the Name of the Lord.”— Thus, as *Jacob*, his Son, was going towards *Haran*, being obliged to lodge in the Field all Night, he had a *Dream*, wherein he saw a Ladder set upon the Earth, the Top of which reached to Heaven; and he saw *Angels* ascending and descending upon it, God himself standing above it, and renewing his Promise and Covenant to him. From hence he concluded that God was *peculiarly present* in this Place. Says he, Chap. xxviii. 12, 13, &c. “ How dreadful is this Place, “ this is none other than the Gate of Heaven; ” and, therefore, he calls the Name of it *Bethel*, and sets up the Stone whereon he lay, and pours Oil on it, and vows that if he came again in Peace to his Father’s House, that Stone which he had set up should be *God’s House*. This is *God’s House*; this is the *Gate of Heaven*. Here God might be said to *keep his Court*, attended by his *holy Angels*, his *Ministers*, whom *Jacob* had seen going up from hence to receive Instructions, and coming down from thence to put them in Execution. Thus the great Mr. *Mead* explains it Book 2. p. 436. He observes, that the *Presence of God* in one Place more than another,

consists in his *Train* or *Retinue*; a *King* is there where his *Court* is; and so God is there *speci-ally present*, where the Angels keep their *Station*. This is the Meaning of that Expression, the *Gate of Heaven*, i. e. *Heaven's Court*; for the *Gate* was wont to be the *Judgment-Hall*, and the Place where *Kings*, attended by their Guards and Ministers, used to sit to hear Causes, and to grant Petitions. At the 3d ch. of *Exod.* v. 2, &c. there is another Instance of God's more *im-mediate Presence*, when the Angel of God appeared and spake to *Moses* out of the midst of the *Burning Bush*. "And *Moses* said, I will  
 " now turn aside, and see this great Sight, why  
 " the Bush is not burnt. And when the Lord  
 " saw that he turned aside to see, God called  
 " unto him out of the midst of the Bush, and  
 " said, *Moses, Moses*; and he said, Here am I.  
 " And he said, Draw not nigh hither, put off  
 " thy Shoes from off thy Feet, for the Place  
 " whereon thou standest is *holy Ground*." The *Angel of the Lord* appeared; that is, the *Sche- chinah*, which had appeared so often to the *Pa- triarchs*. *Put off thy Shoes*; which was in those Eastern Countries an Act of external Respect, as *pulling off the Hat* is amongst us. The Reason assigned for God's commanding him to pay this Mark of Reverence was, because the *Ground was holy*. It was made holy by the *especial Presence* of God, who is most holy, and makes every thing relating to him to be holy too.

From this Account we may observe, in an-  
 swer to *Barklay*, the great Apostle of the *Qua-  
 kers*,

kers, that a *Distinction* and *Consecration* of Places in religious Worship, is not a piece of *Jewish Superstition*, but *prior* to the *ceremonial* Law of *Moses*, and *cœval* with *Adam*; and that it is no Superstition at all to pay *external Reverence* to Places more immediately related to *God*. Parallel to this Instance of *Moses*, we meet with another in *Jeshua*, Chap. v. Ver. 13, &c. when God appeared to him by *Jericho*; *Loose thy Shoe from off thy Foot, for the Place whereon thou standest is holy Ground*. And this is a true Account of the Holiness of the *Jewish Tabernacle* and *Temple*. There were, indeed, great Mysteries concealed under *Types* and *Ceremonies*, but it was the special Presence of God, and not the *Types* and *Ceremonies*, that made the Holiness of the Place. I know no Writer that has treated this Subject so well as *Dean Sherlock* in his Sermon on *Religious Assemblies*; and from thence I shall give the Reader a succinct Account of the Matter.—When *Moses* had set up the *Tabernacle*, a Cloud covered the Tent of the Congregation, and the Glory of the Lord filled the *Tabernacle*, *Exod. xl. 34*. Thus at the Dedication of *Solomon's Temple*, when the Priests were come out of the holy Place, the Cloud filled this House of the Lord, so that the Priests could not stand to minister because of the Cloud; for the Glory of the Lord had filled the House of the Lord †, *1 Kings viii. 10, &c.* This was a visible Sign

I 3

that

† When the second Temple was rebuilt, it was *solemnly dedicated*, though there were not the same visible Tokens of God's Acceptance of it for his House,

that God had taken Possession of this House, and would dwell there, as *Solomon* expounds it, ver. 12. *Then spake Solomon, The Lord said that he would dwell in the thick Darkness: I have surely built thee a House to dwell in, a settled Place for thee to abide in for ever.* For this Reason it is called the *House of God*, his *Habitation*, his *Dwelling-place*, his *Gate*, his *Courts*, and (which is the true Interpretation of all this) his *Presence*. *Let us come before his Presence with Thanksgiving*, Psal. xcvi. 21. to his *House* and *Temple*, where God is *present*; which is therefore called *appearing before the Lord*, as all the Tribes of *Israel* were commanded to do three times every Year, at three solemn Festivals; and this appearing before the Lord, was their coming up to *Jerusalem* to worship at the Temple.

What I have said, I hope, sufficiently proves that before and under the Law, God, who is *essentially* present in *all* Places, was yet so *peculiarly present* in some Places, as he was not in others.

But for the better understanding: That, we must enquire what this *special* and *peculiar* Presence of God is? For this seems a great Difficulty to some Men, that God should not be *equally* present in *all* Places; but the Account of this is plain and short; that tho' God is present *every where*, he is not *equally* present in all Places to *all Purposes*; which is the only possible Distinction that can be made concerning the *Presence* of an *omnipresent* Being. God is present in Heaven, in Earth, and in Hell; but he *manifests*

*sees* himself very differently in each, and these different Manifestations are a different Kind of Presence.

As, to keep to my present Subject, God is present in all the Earth, as the supreme Lord, Governor, and Preserver of all Things; but, in some Places, he was peculiarly present to reveal his Will to Men, and to receive their Homage and Adorations; and this is that which is peculiarly called the *Presence* of God in Scripture.

But, is not God present in all Places to hear the Prayers of good Men who call upon him? Yes, most certainly; and so he was both *before* and *under* the Law; and, yet, we see that he *sanctified* some Places with his more peculiar Presence for the publick and solemn Acts of Worship. Thus, a Prince may receive a private Petition from a private Hand, *wherever* he is present, but yet may think it very fitting to appoint a *Presence* of State to receive the publick Homage and Addresses of his Subjects.— Thus, in fact, it was in the *Jewish* Temples; and it was as reasonable as the publick Solemnities of Worship are, without which Religion itself would be banished the World: For, did Men but believe that they could worship God as well at *Home* as at *Church*, that God is no more present in religious Assemblies, than in their private Closets, there were an End of publick Worship, and of Religion too. This is too visible in those who have entertained this Opinion. But when God, who has his Throne in Heaven, has his Footstool and Presence on

I 4

Earth,

Earth, where he commands us to pay our Homage; this preserves the Sense of God, and of Religion, alive in the World, and gives a just Awe and Reverence for God when we approach his Presence.

This is a very sensible Reason for *appropriated* Places of Worship, where God vouchsafes his more peculiar Presence. If this were not originally a divine Institution, as the Instances already given fairly intimate that it was, then mere natural Reason taught it all Mankind; for there never was any Nation, which worshipped any God, but they erected Temples for their Worship. And it is as evident, that all Nations did believe, that the Gods whom they worshipped, were *peculiarly present* in their Temples. The *Pagans* did not believe their Gods to be omnipresent, and therefore endeavoured, by magical Spells and Charms, to shut them up in their Images and Temples, that they might know where to find them. And in THIS Notion the antient *Christians* abominated the Thoughts of Temples and Images, since *they* worshipped a God who fills *Heaven* and *Earth* with *his* Presence. This indeed was a Corruption of natural Religion, as Polytheism and Idolatry were; but it shews how necessary they thought a divine Presence to a Place of Worship. The *Jews* understood better, that God could not be confined to any Place; *that the Heaven of Heavens could not contain him*, as *Solomon* owns in his Prayer of Dedication; but yet begs, that God would be graciously pleased  
to

to be present to *bear* and *answer* the Petitions which should be offered up there; which is all the peculiar Presence that he prays for as necessary to make a House of Prayer; the Name which God himself gives to the *Jewish* Temple, *My House shall be called a House of Prayer*.

Now, if this be the Notion of God's House, that it is a *House of Prayer*, a House where God is peculiarly present to hear our Prayers, we must own that every *Christian Church* is as much the *House of God*, as the Temple at *Jerusalem* was; unless we will deny that God is as present in *Christian Assemblies*, and in Places dedicated to *Christian Worship*, as he was in the *Jewish* Temple; which would be to make *Christianity* a more imperfect Dispensation than *Judaism*; for *that* is certainly the most perfect State of the Church, where God is most peculiarly present. There is indeed a great Difference between the *Jewish* Temples and *Christian Churches*; but, as to the *Presence of God*, which *only* makes a Temple, the Advantage is greatly on the *Christian* Side. The Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, and Temple, contained many Figures of *Christ*; but those *Types* were not the *Presence of God*, nor the Object of their religious Worship, which had been Idolatry against the Second Commandment: But for the sake of these *Types*, God chose that Place for his peculiar Presence.—Now, instead of *these Types*, we have the *Antetype* himself, the Son of God made Flesh, who, tho' ascended into Heaven, has promised his peculiar Presence in  
all

all the Assemblies of *Christians*; which is such a Presence of God as never filled the *Jewish* Temple till *Christ* appeared; for which Reason God tells them, that the second Temple, tho' it fell vastly short of the external Beauty and Magnificence of the first, yet should excel in Glory, by the personal Appearance of *Christ* in it. So that *Christ* having promised, that wherever two or three are gathered together in his Name, he will be in the midst of them, every *Christian* Church has a divine Presence greater than the Temple: For, tho' we should grant that this Promise extends to all the *occasional* Meetings of *Christians*, wherever the Place be, yet it much more extends to all the *solemn* and *publick* Places and Acts of Worship. Thus there was but one Temple in the whole Land of *Canaan*. God, for mystical Reasons, confin'd his more peculiar Presence to that House where he had placed the Figures and Types of *Christ*, thro' whom only we have Access to God. But now this blessed *Jesus*, who is greater than the Temple, is in all *Christian* Assemblies, and makes every *Christian* Church greater than the Temple. In this Sense our Saviour told the Woman of *Samaria*, "Woman, believe me, the Hour is coming, when ye shall neither on this Mountain, nor yet at *Jerusalem*, worship the Father," *John* iv. 21. Which does not signify, that hereafter there should be no *peculiar* and *appropriate* Places of Worship, but that the *Presence* and Worship of God should no longer be confined to any *one* Place, neither to the Temple of *Jerusalem*, nor *Samaria*;



*Samaria*; but it should be free all over the World to erect Houses of Prayer and Worship, where God would be present with them, as in the *Temple of Jerusalem*; for there should an End be put to that typical State, and typical Worship, which was confined to the Temple, and the true Worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth. And this spiritual Worship is confined to no one Place, but will find God present all the World over; which is so far from abrogating all peculiar Places of Worship, such as the Temple at *Jerusalem* and *Samaria* were, that it makes every Church, whatsoever Part of the World it be in, in a truer Sense, the House of God, than ever the Temple at *Jerusalem* was. Indeed, a *formal Consecration* of Places appointed for *publick Worship* could not be practised in the first Ages of *Christianity*, while the Church was under Persecution, because, after their having been thus solemnly given to God for his Use, and his *only*, the *Christians* might have been dispossess'd of them, and they might have been applied, by the *Heathens*, to *secular*, or *idolatrous* Uses; but, as soon as *Christianity* was embraced and protected by the *civil Powers*, the antient Practice of *consecrating Churches*, *i. e.* Places *appropriated* to publick Worship, was revived, and has been ever since continued in the Christian Church, till some *modern Protestants* thought fit to be wiser than all *Antiquity*, and to censure all such *outward Ceremonies* as *Superstition*. One would think that common Modesty and

Humility

Humility should teach them to pay a Regard to a Practice which has the Sanction of the *Patriarchs*, and of *God himself*, by his Servant *Moses*; and to imagine, that such an universal Practice by those who were *divinely inspired*, and of all *pious Christians* in the *primitive Times*, must be grounded upon wise Reasons, and calculated to promote Piety, by helping to create an *inward Reverence* for such Places, and to excite Devotion in the Mind. One general Observation I cannot help making upon these *purely spiritual* Worshippers; they seem to be utterly ignorant of *human Nature*, not at all considering that while the *Mind* is united to the *Body*, and subject to be influenced by it, the *Senses* will have their Share in attracting our Attention, and creating, or improving, religious Dispositions. Upon this is founded the Custom of all our Solemnities at the Appointment of *civil Magistrates*, the Regalia and magnificent Habits made use of in the Execution of their Office; and if all these *outward Formalities* were to be laid aside, and Magistrates were always to appear, in the Eyes of the Multitude, as *common Men*, they would soon lose their Authority and Influence. The Application of this Remark to *Religion* is very obvious, *Human Nature* being the same at *Church*, as in a *Court of Justice*, and liable to the same Influence from external Appearances and Ceremonies. We, of the *Church of England*, have the Happiness of worshipping God in Places *consecrated*, as the *Tabernacle* and the *Temple* were, by *solemn Prayers*

ers offered up to God, by the Bishops and Pastors of *Christ's* Church; these are his Houses where he delights to dwell, where he expects us to pay our publick Homage; where he will be best pleased with our Addresses, and the most ready to receive and answer them; hither, therefore, we should be ready and glad to repair as often as possible. If we had the Piety of *David*, we should have his ardent Desires to appear before God in his House of Prayer; and our constant Attendance, and devout and reverent Behaviour there, would be the Means of *increasing* our Piety, as it did his. I shall now inquire how *often* Men ought to pray.

## C H A P. IX.

Concerning the Times, or Frequency  
of P R A Y E R.

ONE would hardly think it possible for any *rational* Creature to entertain so *irrational* an Opinion, but in the fourth Century there did arise a Set of Men who thought themselves obliged to be *always* praying, as if a *Christian* had nothing else to do in this World: This monstrous Error was grounded upon some Passages of Scripture misunderstood. We are commanded to *pray always*; to pray without *ceasing*; which they understood *so literally*, as to think that they ought to spend their *whole* Time in the Exercise of this Duty; not considering what a Number of *other* Duties every Man is

commanded in Scripture to do: So that if we are commanded to spend our *whole* Time in the Performance of *one* Duty, what Time will there be left for the *other* Duties that are equally enjoined us? or, how can the Scriptures be reconciled to themselves? A *literal* Interpretation, therefore, of the above-mentioned Passages, relating to the Duty of Prayer, is so absurd, that I should not have thought it worth mentioning, if there were not, even at *this* Time, many *Enthusiasts*, called *Methodists*, who suffer their *Piety* to eat up their *Morality*, to the Neglect of the common Duties and Offices of the Station in which God has placed them, and the Ruin of themselves and Families. These ignorant People, instead of being encouraged by their Teachers to be perpetually running after them, should be taught to mind the Business of their *Calling*, in order to answer the proper Ends of Life; and that one great End of *Prayer* is, to enable them to do it with Diligence and Fidelity, and to behave properly as *social* Creatures. Besides, if we *had* nothing else to do but to *pray*, we could not be *always praying*, to any manner of Purpose. Our present State will not admit of such an uninterrupted Course of Devotion, whatever we may be capable of in the *next* Life. It is impossible for our *Attention* and *Affection* to be thus constantly kept up, though the *Lips* might be *incessantly* employed; and, unless we pray with *Attention*, and some tolerable Degree of *Affection*, we might as well be doing nothing. But we may be said, in a very proper Sense, to

*pray always, and without ceasing*, if we be daily constant in the Observance of *set Hours* of Prayer, both in *publick* and in *private*.

*First*, Let us consider *Frequency* as it respects *publick* Prayer. This will *vary* with the *various Circumstances* of Men in the *different Stations* of Life; which will afford fewer, or more frequent, Opportunities of attending the Service of the Church. There is one Rule, indeed, that will reach *all Mankind*, unless hindered by *Sickness*, *Works of Mercy*, and *absolute Necessity*: These Cases excepted, every one is obliged to attend *publick Worship* *twice* on a Sunday. I shall say the less upon this Head *here*, because I have fully considered it in Two Sermons lately published upon *the Observation of the Sunday*, which will be annexed to this Discourse, as having an immediate Connection with it. I shall only take notice of one Thing, which I am most sincerely and heartily concerned that there is so much Occasion to mention. I have already given a Hint of it, and would be glad to drop a Subject that may possibly give Offence to some whose Stations I greatly honour. I defy any Man living to have a more respectful Regard for his *Superiors* than I sincerely have, to be more pleased with any proper Opportunity of shewing it, or to be more unwilling to disoblige them: But as I have presumed to take upon me the Business of a *publick Instructor*, upon Subjects of the last Importance to the Salvation of Mankind, the Support of Government, the Peace and Happiness of the Society whereof

I am a Member, it is incumbent upon me to discharge my Office with Fidelity, tho' I should be glad to do it with the utmost Tenderneſs. Perſons in High-life, and of affluent Fortunes, being independent, have not the leaſt Pretence for neglecting to attend the publick Service of the Church, and yet many of them ſcarce ever appear there, unleſs neceſſitated by the Duty of ſome Civil Office, or occaſionally drawn by ſome Motives of Intereſt, or Decency; by which means they not only neglect their own Duty, but hinder their Servants from performing theirs; and by the Influence of their Examples, occaſion others in the Neighbourhood to ſtay away. When they ſee Perſons whom they naturally ſuppoſe to have more improved Underſtandings, ſhew ſuch an utter Contempt for publick Worſhip, it muſt leſſen their Opinion of its Obligation and Importance, and beget ſuch an *Indifferency*, at leaſt, as will give every the ſlighteſt Excuse for not attending it the greater Weight. But there are ſtill many more who would be thought to have a very ſerious Senſe of Religion, while they content themſelves with attending the Service *one* Part of the Day only, without any better Excuse than not being willing to riſe early enough to prepare themſelves for Church; or for the Pleaſure of indulging, after Dinner, in Converſation with their Friends. If what I have ſaid upon the Advantages attending the due Performance of the Duty of *publick Prayer at Church*, can have any Weight, I think it muſt put all ſuch idle Excuses out of

Coun-

Countenance ; if it has had *no* Effect, I am sure it is not in *my* Power to say any thing that will, and therefore I can only beg of God to give them a better Sense of their Duty. But, while I am complaining of the great Decay of *Piety* among People of *Fashion*, Justice requires me to acknowledge that there are, to *my Knowledge*, (and I hope there are many more in other Parts of the Kingdom) Gentlemen of very large Fortunes, who constantly attend the Church with all their Servants that can possibly be spared, both *Morning* and *Afternoon*. One in particular, whom I have formerly had the Pleasure of knowing, has so strict a Sense of his Duty that if a *Nobleman* of the first Quality dined with him upon a *Sunday* he never excused himself to his *Maker* for not attending him at his House of Prayer, but always excused himself to his *Friends* for not bearing them company in the Time of Divine Service, leaving only a Servant to attend them in his Absence : And he was so happy in the *Uniformity* of his Conduct, that they did not think him either *rude*, or *superstitious*.

2. There are other *set* Times for *publick* Prayer besides what are appointed on *Sundays*. These, indeed, are not like the former, of *universal* Obligation, but to be observed wherever People have a convenient Opportunity ; I mean, the publick Service of the Church on *Week-Days*. Many Persons constantly attend it both Parts of the Day on *Sundays*, because they consider that *Day* as a Day set apart for *religious* Uses, but the rest of the Week they apprehend

to be *theirs*, to be employed in what Manner they shall think fit, provided they do not spend it in any unlawful<sup>d</sup> Business, or Diversion. Of this strange Opinion I meet with not only ignorant and illiterate Persons, but with very sensible and serious People. But, where do they learn this Divinity? Not from the *Nature* and *Effects* of publick Prayer, for those are the very same at *all* Times: Not from the Practice of the *Jews*, for they assembled together for the Worship of God at other Times besides the *Sabbath*: Not from the *primitive Christians*; not from the Constitution of our own Church, which has appointed a *daily* Service, and requires the *Clergy* to *read* daily Prayers at Church, where they can get a Congregation, and are not otherwise *occasionally* hindered. Now, if *publick Authority* has provided a *daily* Service, and the *Clergy* be commanded, as often as they conveniently can, to *read* it, surely it must be the Duty of the *Laity*, as often as they conveniently can, to attend it. Men are not to neglect the Duties of their Station, but every Station of Life will afford more frequent Opportunities than most People make use of. In *London* and *Westminster*, there are Prayers in some Church or another, at almost every Hour of the Day, by which means *Business* and *Piety*, *Pleasure* and *Piety*, might often be reconciled, where there is an Inclination to do it. But, now, go into any of the Churches, and you seldom see any *young* Persons, much seldomer any Persons of *Fashion*, but only a few *old* and *poor* People; as if *Youth*

and



and *Devotion*, like *Love* and *Old Age*, were inconsistent; as if *Riches* and *Grandeur* made it *below* them to worship their *Creator*. The *royal Prophet* was a Person of a most excellent Understanding, and polite Taste, (as appears by his Compositions) and yet he did not think *Devotion* an *absurd* and *unpolite* Thing, but took the highest Delight in *publick Worship*. He was the *greatest Prince* that ever reigned *before*, or *since*, his Son *Solomon*, and yet he thought it his *highest Honour* to be admitted into the more immediate Presence of his *Maker*. He had great Variety of *Business* to transact in the Government of a large and populous Kingdom, and yet he found *Leisure*, because he always had an *Inclination*, to attend the Service of the *Temple*.

From the *Metropolis* let us travel into the *Country*, and take a melancholy View of the State of *Piety* in the *larger Villages* and *Market-Towns*. In most of them there are Prayers on *Wednesdays*, *Fridays*, and *Holidays*, but *few*, of either Sort, have *daily* Prayers. It does not become *me* to prescribe to my *reverend Brethren*, many of whom are my Superiors in *Age*, in *Charaēter*, and in *Station*; but I may decently, and I hope as inoffensively, declare what I apprehend to be *my Duty*. When God Almighty thought fit to remove me from *London* into this Place I found a very populous Parish, Prayers only *Wednesdays*, *Fridays*, and *Holidays*, and those very badly attended. Upon this I drew up a Course of Sermons upon the Subject, and immediately after introduced *daily* Prayers, which

I make it a Rule constantly to attend, whether I read or not; sometimes when it is not a little inconvenient to me. The *Morning* is the only Time of riding for *Pleasure*, but I never ride for *Pleasure only*, unless I can do it before or after Prayers are over, being very desirous, by my *Example*, as well as by *Precept*, to encourage my Parishioners to attend them. But sometimes it is still *more* inconvenient. The *Morning* is the Time for *writing*, as well as for *riding*, and the Mind is not always equally disposed for it. The Bell, perhaps, calls me to Church when I am in the midst of an Argument, and in a better Disposition, than usual, for writing; if I leave off, the Chain of my Thoughts may be broke, and it may not be in my Power afterwards to reassume it to the same Advantage. What is to be done in this Case? Shall I neglect the *Prayers*, or my *Composition*? Very worthy pious Men of my Acquaintance, are of another Opinion; but I think it of more consequence to set my Parishioners an Example than to read the most learned and useful Book that ever was wrote, or to write the finest Things that ever were conceived. Unless I am distress'd in *Time*, and the Thing demands *immediate Execution*, I take my Chance for another favourable Disposition. I censure nobody for thinking differently from me, and I hope nobody will censure *me* for so freely declaring my *own* Sentiments, and the *Reasons* upon which they are grounded. If I were a *Clergyman* in a more eminent Situation, of a more important Character,

or

or of more Leisure, I should think myself still more obliged to be cautious how I gave the World the least Reason to suspect my Zeal for *publick Worship*; and the World, in excuse for their own Neglect, are but too forward to take Encouragement from our *Non-attendance*, even where there are the most justifiable Reasons for it. Nothing could hurt Religion more than a Notion among the *Laity* that the *Clergy* do not care to go to Church, unless they are obliged to do Duty; and they are ever watchful to make Observations of this Nature. But enough, and, I fear, too much, on this tender Point. It is time to attend to the Behaviour of the *Laity*. As to my *Parishioners*, I must, in Justice, acknowledge that I have daily four, sometimes five or six times as many at Prayers as I found when I first came, tho' there were then Prayers only twice a Week; and yet the Congregation is far short of the Number that might contrive their Business so as to spare half an Hour in a Morning, for their Attendance upon God in his House, without any Prejudice to their worldly Affairs; and would do it too, if they had as right Notions of *spiritual*, as they have of *temporal* Advantages. Nay, I daily see People loitering about the Town while the Bell calls them to Church, quite at a loss to know how to *waste* that Time; or, perhaps, they are as idly employed at Home. Good God! If there be any Sense in Religion, surely there cannot be common Sense in such Conduct. Mankind are so impatient of Attention to any Thing but their Business and their

Pleasures, that it is hardly possible to make them think long enough, and close enough, upon *religious* Subjects to receive any lasting Impressions. But I'll try to put this Case in so strong a Light, that it shall strike any one that is not a downright *Idiot*, or *Madman*. Suppose there were a very great Man in the Neighbourhood, of such uncommon Perfections that he was the Admiration, of such diffusive Goodness that he was the Delight of all his Neighbours, of such extensive Power and Influence that he was capable of *making* them all happy; that they were indebted to him daily for all the Health and Success, for all the Necessaries and Comforts that they enjoyed, or expected; but that, notwithstanding his incomparable Excellencies, his Greatness in *Himself*, his Goodness to *them*, his Power to blast, or prosper, all their Schemes of Happiness, they were daily provoking his Resentment by contradicting his Will, and doing Things greatly disagreeable to him. Suppose, farther, that there was a *set Time*, every Day, when as many of the Neighbours as could possibly spare Time from their necessary Employments, should wait on him, by his own Invitation and Command, with their united Acknowledgments of their Disobedience, with their united Acknowledgments of his Excellencies, with their united Thanksgivings for the many undeserved Favours which he daily bestowed upon them, with their united Petitions for the Continuance of his Favours; would not Generosity, would not Gratitude, would not Self-interest,

interest, would not Self-preservation, would not all these strong Motives *conspire* to induce, and could so many strong Motives fail of persuading to an assiduous Endeavour to attend, and to attend with Pleasure, as often as possible? Much less would they add Impudence to their Neglect, by idly sauntering up and down before his Door, while others are going into the House. Reader! are you quite blind, or are you determined to keep your Eyes close shut against the Light of Conviction? If not, open them and see (and if you open them ever so little you must see) that this, tho' strong and affecting, is not a *full* Representation of the Case between *God* and his *Creatures*; neither can any Case be put that will be parallel. This however may serve to convince, and if not to *convince*, yet, at least, to *silence* the *irreligious Absenters*; tho' I should be much better pleased if I could *persuade* them to a more constant Attendance. What I have now said concerns those particularly who live in *Market-Towns* and *large Villages*, where, by reason of their Nearness to the Church, they may have Opportunities which such as live at a greater Distance from it, cannot so conveniently take, unless they be *Gentlemen of Fortune*, who are more at Leisure, and can *convey* themselves without any Trouble. I should think that *they* might, *sometimes*, spare an Hour from their Country Amusements to attend upon God who has bless'd them with such superior Advantages. To *all sorts* of People, from the *highest* to the *lowest*, I must observe, that if the

Times of *publick* Prayer happen to be inconsistent with their other Affairs, this is an additional Reason to enforce the Practice of *Family* Prayer, which they may more easily accommodate to their *Conveniency*. And having Occasion to mention this Subject again, I shall transcribe a Passage from a most admirable and agreeable Writer, Dr. *Hildrop*, his *Husbandman's Spiritual Companion*, lately published by *John* and *James Rivington*, in *St. Paul's Church-yard*, pag. 62.

“ Every *Christian* Family should be considered  
 “ as so many Servants of God united under one  
 “ Head, who have all some common Blessings  
 “ to ask, some common Dangers to fear, some  
 “ common Mercies to give Thanks for; (I add,  
 “ some common Sins to acknowledge) there-  
 “ fore, the Governor of it should call together  
 “ as many as can be at Leisure, twice a Day, in  
 “ the Morning and the Evening; and by him-  
 “ self, or some one of the Family, offer up  
 “ their Prayers for what they want, and their  
 “ Thanksgivings for what they enjoy. (I add  
 “ again, their Confession of their common Sins)  
 “ But, alas! I have Reason to fear, that in too  
 “ many Families it is never practised at all, to  
 “ the eternal Scandal and Reproach of those  
 “ who neglect it; for Prayer is not only a prin-  
 “ cipal Part of divine Service, but a necessary  
 “ one too, as it both engages and enables us  
 “ to perform the other Parts of it; and where  
 “ this is omitted, it is scarce to be expected that  
 “ the rest should be performed. And now how  
 “ dreadful a Sight is it to any serious, confide-  
 “ rate

“ rate *Christian*, to see a Family separate in an  
 “ Evening without the least Appearance of *Chri-*  
 “ *stian* Devotion, and meet again next Morn-  
 “ ing, like the other Animals in the Family,  
 “ only to be fed, without any Thought of Gra-  
 “ titude to Almighty God for his past Mercies,  
 “ or any Petition for his merciful Protection for  
 “ the future? In short, it is a deplorable Obser-  
 “ vation, that *Family Devotion*, and *saying*  
 “ *Grace before and after Meat*, are growing  
 “ strangely out of Fashion among those who  
 “ are called *great Folks*, and *the better Sort of*  
 “ *People*. Strange Infatuation! monstrous In-  
 “ gratitude! that they who, by the peculiar In-  
 “ dulgence of Heaven, enjoy the greatest Share  
 “ of worldly Prosperity, should forget the Hand  
 “ that bestows it, refuse the poor Returns of a  
 “ thankful Heart, and neglect to beg his Bles-  
 “ sing upon it. These are sad Indications of  
 “ a latent Infidelity, which is spreading far  
 “ and wide in this sinful Generation.” The  
*Nobility* and *prime Gentry* may make *Family-*  
*Devotion* still more solemn and effectual, by  
 keeping a regular, worthy Clergyman in their  
 House; not as Part of their *Retinue*, to be treated  
 as a *Servant*, but as the *consecrated Minister* of  
 their *common Creator*, to offer up the Addresses  
 of the Family to him, and to bless them in his  
 Name. A good Clergyman, kept upon a true  
 Principle of *Piety*, like the Ark of God, might  
 be a Comfort to the whole Family, and make  
 every thing prosper: *Infidels* may divert them-  
 selves with this, as they do with every *other*  
 Part

Part of *Religion*, but none *but* an Infidel, or a *very unthinking* Believer can do it. I am willing, and glad, to do Justice to every Body, and I freely own that, as far as I can inform myself, the *Dissenters* in general, are more regular in the Performance of *Family-Duty* than the Members of the *Church of England*: If this be a Reproach to us, let us wipe it off by following their Example in every thing that is praise-worthy. But, there is one Instance of Piety in which I must think them very blameable; in this, and in other *Market-Towns*, and *large Villages*, they have the Opportunity of *publick Worship* with us when they have none in their *own Way*, and yet never attend it; I say, in this Neglect they are wanting both in *Piety*, and *Charity*. Formerly the *Separation* was founded upon different Principles from what it is *now*; the *Terms of Communion* were, *then*, thought to be *sinful*, and all such as were in *that Persuasion* were obliged in Conscience to refuse ever to communicate with us in the Use of our Service; but the Case is quite altered. They *separate* from us because they think their *own Way* of Worship more *edifying* than ours; but I know no Dissenter that refuses, *occasionally*, to join with us in the Use of our *established Worship*. Now, if it be *lawful* (as they allow it to be by their Practice) to join with us at *one Time*, it is equally lawful to do it at *any Time*; and if it be *lawful*, it must be their *Duty* to do it, whenever they have a convenient Opportunity, provided they have not, at the same time, an Opportunity of worshipping God in a Way that they think *preferable*.



ble. Why they never meet together for *publick* *Worship* unless there be a *Sermon*, when *Prayer* must be allowed to be the *principal* Thing, I leave *them* to think of at their leisure, it being no Part of my present Subject. I argue, from the *Nature* and *Advantages* of *publick* *Prayer*, that all *pious* *Christians* should attend it as often as they can; and, consequently, that when they have not an Opportunity of doing it at their own Places of *Worship* they ought to do it at *Church*, rather than not do it at all: But, Reasons of *Charity*, as well as of *Piety*, require this of them. *Brotherly Love* is a *Christian* Duty; and brotherly Love is never so effectually shewn as by communicating with us in *publick* *Christian* Offices, insomuch that refusing to communicate with us when they can do it *lawfully*, is denying us to be true Members of *Christ's* *Catholick* *Church*, and betrays a very *uncharitable* Disposition. I speak freely, but with great Temper, and in the Spirit of Meekness. If they do me Justice, all the *Dissenters*, wherever I have liv'd, must own that I always behaved to them with Respect and Friendliness; but I must not compliment them at the expence of *Truth*, and *Piety*: Indeed, it would be *no* Compliment to them, because it would be encouraging them to go on in what I *must* think, and ever have thought, an *unchristian* Practice. I have argued this Matter very candidly with some of the most sensible of their Teachers; and, indeed, very learned and sensible Men I found them to be. What they urged I will fairly tell you, and if it gives my *Readers*

any

any Satisfaction, it is more than it gave *me*. They say that they disallow of our *Authority to Command* them to attend our Service; be it so, I never rested the Matter upon that Footing, but upon the Authority of *Christ*, who commands *all Christians* to assemble themselves together for *Christian Worship*, as often as they can, consistently with other Duties of Life, and from *their* Acknowledgement of *ours* being a *lawful Christian* Way of Worship. They plead, farther, that they prefer *Extemporary Prayers* to *Forms* of Prayer. Who denies it? What I insist upon is this, that, by their *joining* with us in the Use of a *Form*, occasionally, they allow *Forms* of Prayer to be a *lawful* Way of Worship; and, consequently, that they ought to join in the Use of them when they have no Opportunity of praying in a *better* Manner. Whether *Forms* of Prayer, or *Extemporary Prayers* be best, will be considered under the next Head.

But, besides stated Times of Prayer at *Church*, and in *Families*, I must not omit to repeat what I have already mentioned; that daily Prayer in the *Closet* must be practised, for the Reasons already given, under the Head of *the Advantages peculiar* to *private* Prayer.

*Frequency* of Prayer requires us, occasionally, to lift up our Hearts to God in *short Ejaculations*. As Prayer is the Life of Religion, these are the Life of Prayer; they keep the Flames of Devotion, like the Fire of the *vestal Virgins*, continually burning. The Scripture affords us abundance of Instances of this Sort of Prayer, but, particularly the Book of *Psalms*, the richest

Treasury of warm and tender Devotion that ever was conceived, and most of them by the devoutest, mere Man, that ever lived; I mean, the *royal Prophet, holy David*. He took occasion from almost every Circumstance of his Life to strike out sudden Flashes of Devotion, which kept his Heart continually warm. When he was in Distress, we find him comforting himself after this manner; *Why art thou cast down, O my Soul, put thy Trust in God*. Upon the Receipt of an unexpected Mercy he would say, *Bless the Lord, O my Soul, and forget not all his Benefits*. When he was in Heaviness, he would think upon God; when his Heart was vexed, he would complain, in some such short Address as this; *The Sorrows of my Heart, O God, are enlarged, O bring thou me out of my Troubles*. As soon as he was freed from his Trouble, he would cry out, *Turn again then unto thy rest, for the Lord hath sustained thee*. Every thing that presented itself to his View raised his Affections, and discovered the Breathings of his Soul towards God and Goodness: The Ground bringing forth its Fruit in due Season put him upon praising the Wisdom and Goodness of God; *O Lord how manifold are thy Works, in Wisdom hast thou made them all, the Earth is full of thy Riches, so is the great and wide Sea also*. The Heavens, the Structure of his own Body, the Dispensations of Providence; every Observation that occurred to his Mind, upon God, upon Nature, upon his own Condition, made him break forth into pathetick Starts of Devotion: His habitual Piety generated these rapturous Exclamations, and the habitual Exercise

cise of them made his Piety still more ardent, and blaze out the more strongly. Let us imitate this good Man with Sincerity, and we shall daily grow more and more like him.—Neither are these wanting Instances of this Sort of Prayer in the *New Testament*: The *Publican*, in a deep Sense of his Guilt and Unworthiness, smote upon his Breast and said, *God be merciful to me a Sinner*: In the like compendious Manner, *St. Stephen*, under the Hands of his Murderers, prays, *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit, lay not this Sin to their charge*: Likewise our *Saviour* in his Agony, and, upon the Cross, expressed himself in Petitions short and ejaculatory, making considerable Stops and Intermiſſions between them; *Father, if thou be willing, remove this Cup from me, &c. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do; my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me, &c.* Such Instances, as these, should inflame our Hearts, and make us ready, as Occasions offer, to shoot forth our Addresses to Heaven. Such short and fervent Ejaculations must needs be very prevalent with God, and have a strong Influence upon the Mind; it is not the Length of the Prayer, but the Temper of the Soul which God chiefly regards: The short Ejaculation of the *Publican* was more acceptable than the long Prayer of the *Pharisee*: Such sudden Ejaculations must needs be full of Ardor and Fervency, being *darted* from the Heart with great Quickness and Vehemence. I speak what every pious Breast has felt, and earnestly recommend this Practice to every one who sincerely desires to  
grow

grow in Piety and Goodness. But it is not *necessary*, that, in these ejaculatory Addresses, we should use *Words*. *Prayer*, as I have observed, consists in *lifting up our Souls* to God: The Conceptions of our Mind may be too sudden, and too big for Utterance; but the Mind at the same Time may be *addressed*, or *directed*, to God in the same manner as when our Thoughts are clothed with Language. This kind of Prayer, for the Excellency of it, exceeds the Power of Words, and is beyond all Expression. And this kind of Prayer it is in our Power to make use of in all Places, and at all Times; wherever we are we may sometimes think upon God, and his Providence; in whatever manner we are employed, or engaged; in Business, in Recreations, upon the Road, or in our private Walks, we may now and then put up an ejaculatory Prayer to God; when we cannot lift up our *Hands*, we may lift up our *Hearts* to Heaven; and by thus intermingling our Prayers with our worldly Concerns, we may not only *exercise* and *increase* our *Piety*, but bring down a Blessing upon our honest Industry, and preserve our Innocence in the midst of *Business*, or *Amusements*: By this means we may almost, in a *literal* Sense, pray *without ceasing*; and, by thus often looking up to Heaven, make our whole Life, as it were, one continued Act of *Devotion*. To qualify ourselves for this holy Exercise, and by this Exercise for *Heaven*, we should be daily conversant with the *Bible*, especially the *Psalms*: This will not only beget in us a pious Disposition, which

will gradually improve into a Habit, but furnish us with proper Sentiments and Expressions, for such Ejaculations as I have been recommending.

And thus having considered the scriptural Acceptation of the Word *Prayer*, or *praying*; the *Nature* of Prayer, or wherein it consists; the *proper Object* of our Prayers; our *Obligations*, both from *Reason* and *Revelation*, to pray; the *advantageous Effects* of Prayer upon our Minds; the distinct Advantages *peculiar* to *private* and *publick* Prayer; the *Place* where God may most acceptably be worshipped; the *Times*, or *Frequency* of Prayer; there is but one Head left, and that is, to consider the *right Manner* of performing the Duty.

## C H A P. X.

### *The right Manner of performing the Duty of Prayer.*

THE Success of every Thing depends upon the right Manner of performing it; and if it be not performed in such a Manner as to answer its proper Ends, an Action, tending in its natural Consequences, to produce the most beneficial Effects, may be attended with the most pernicious ones: This is the Case in all the common Affairs of Life: We may not only be frustrated in our Purposes, but do ourselves great Mischief by an Application of unfit Measures, or a wrong Application of right ones: If we stand in need of the *Assistance* of others we may use such

such unfit Measures for the obtaining their *Friendship*, as may procure their *Enmity*. If we address ourselves to them under the Notion of paying them *Respect*, we may do it in such an unmannerly Way as implies *Disrespect*, rather than *Esleem*; and, instead of paying Them a *Compliment*, it may carry an *Affront*, and for *Favour* procure the highest Marks of *Displeasure*. And the more excellent the Person to whom we make our Addresses, the more exalted his Station and Character, the greater our Dependance upon him for Success and Happiness, the greater Care is required in our Deportment to him, because if we misbehave ourselves the Affront rises in proportion to those Circumstances. *God Almighty*, the most excellent in Perfections, to whom we owe ourselves, all our Enjoyments in this Life, and all our Expectations in a better; this great, this awful and tremendous Being, the High and Holy One that inhabiteth Eternity, this is the Object of our Prayers. What great Reason, therefore, have we to use our utmost Caution, in all our Addresses, *what* we say to him, *how* we express ourselves, and how we behave whenever we approach his Presence. I know no Writer that has expressed himself more significantly and handsomely on this Head, than the celebrated Dr. *Watts* in his Treatise of *Prayer*. What I have to offer, will fall under the following Heads:

1. The Prayers themselves.

2. The offering them up with a proper Attention of Mind, and Fervency.

3. With a suitable Behaviour of Body.

1. The first Thing to be considered is, the *Prayers themselves*. For, if when we approach the Throne of an *earthly* Prince, or attend the Levies of a *prime Minister*, or a more private Friend, with a *Petition*, we take care that it be drawn up in the most respectful and handsome manner, both as to Substance, Form, and Expression, surely, when we approach the Throne of the Great King of Heaven, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, to humble ourselves before him for our many provoking Sins, to acknowledge his most glorious Perfections, and most gracious Favours, and to supplicate the Continuance of them, the utmost Care should be taken that every Part of our Addresses be the most proper, as to the *Matter* of them, disposed into the best *Order*, and clothed in the most decent and apt Terms. This is the Argument of the great Preacher at the 5th of *Ecclesiastes*, ver. 2. 'Be not hasty with thy Mouth, and let not  
' thine Heart be hasty to utter any thing before  
' God, for God is in *Heaven*, and thou upon  
' *Earth*.' This awful Regard, in our Addresses to the Divine Majesty, we have abundant Reason, from *Scripture*, to imagine that God expects from us. Did he, himself, direct that the *House*, in which he was to be worshipped, should be the most stately and magnificent that ever was built; that every Thing made use of in the publick Service should be rich and costly,



ly, in some measure answerable to his glorious Majesty; that all the *Sacrifices* should be the most perfect in their Kinds, without *Spot*, or *Blemish*; that all the *Persons* who had the *Honour* to wait at his Altar should be free from any *personal Defects*? And will he not require that the *Addresses* of our *Understanding* and *Heart* should be as perfect as it is possible for our *Weakness* to make them? Besides, the more *perfect* our *Prayers* are, the better fitted they are to have the proper *Influence* upon our *Minds*. It may be said, that God, who sees the *Heart*, will accept of a *good Intention*, be our *Prayers* ever so *imperfect*. But the Answer to this is short and easy. It is impossible that there should be a right good *Intention*, unless we pray in the *best* Manner that we can. I am speaking of *stated* *Prayers*, at *set* *Times*, whether in the *Closet*, or in *publick*, not of *occasional Ejaculations*, or such *circumstantial Additions* as may be necessary to be made in our *private* *Prayers* where there was no *Opportunity* for *Premeditation*. I will illustrate this Matter by the Instance just mentioned. If an ignorant illiterate Subject should have a *sudden* *Occasion* to speak to his *Prince*, the *Prince*, if he were a wise and good Man, would certainly hear him with *Patience* and *Candor*, and make just *Allowances* for the *Incapacity* of the Person, and the *Imperfections* of his *Speech*; but if he knew beforehand, that at such a *set* *Time* it was expected that he should offer an *Address*, and had an *Opportunity* of getting the *Assistance* of some sen-

sible discreet Friend to draw it up for him in a decent Manner, and yet would offer up a low, nonsensical Piece of Stuff of his own penning, his Majesty would look upon such a disrespectful Application as an Affront, and reject his-Petition with Contempt and Indignation. So, likewise, we may have *sudden* Occasions of speaking to God, and in all such Cases he will most assuredly accept of the *most imperfect* Prayers, provided we express ourselves in the *best* Manner that we can; but if we should rashly presume to address God *extempore*, when we have Time and Opportunity to consider beforehand, and to have our Prayers drawn up in a *much better* Manner, more suitably to the high Dignity of God's Nature, and the Meanness and Vileness of *ours*, is there not all imaginable Reason to conclude that he would think himself very rudely treated, instead of being honoured. Now, let us apply this plain State of the Case to our *private* and *publick* Prayers. The *main Substance* of our *Morning* and *Evening* Prayers in our *Closet*, are of so *general* a Nature, that the same Form may be used *constantly*, and consequently it may be drawn up with the utmost Care; so that the most illiterate and ignorant People have the Opportunity, not only of *Premeditation*, but of the Assistance of *others*; and therefore are inexcusable if they trust to *their own* Capacity, and still more culpable if they trust to their *extempory* Conceptions.\* In *publick*, whether in a *Family*,

OR

\* Dr. Watts, at P. 70 of his Book on Prayer, says, "We should seek to be furnished with a Variety of Expression, that  
" our

or at *Church*, there is the same Opportunity, and the same Reason, for *Premeditation*, as in our *private Prayers*, since no Man, let his Abilities be ever so great, can at *all Times*, if at *any Time*, pray so fully and accurately if he prays *extempore*, as if he uses *Premeditation*; for which Reason Dr. *Watts* strongly recommends it to his *Brethren*; and as far as Prayers are *premeditated*, they are so far a *Form* of Prayer to *him that prays*; and *all PUBLICK Prayers*, whether they be *premeditated*, or conceived *extempore*, must, in the Nature of Things, be a *Form* to the *Congregation*; and the Teacher *imposes* the Use of it upon them as much as the *establish'd Church* imposes the Use of the *Liturgy* upon *us*. I hope the *Dissenters* will not take Offence where there is none intended, or any just Occasion given: I must endeavour to do Justice to my Subject,

L 3

but

“ our Prayers may always have something *new*, and something “ *entertaining* in them.” This is a most extraordinary Passage, and I was greatly surpris'd to find it in so serious a Writer. Are People to attend *publick Worship* as they frequent *Plays*, for *Amusement*? Are our Passions to be rais'd by the *Sound of Words*, and by having our *Imaginations* play'd upon, or by the Alteration of the *Understanding* to the *Nature* of the *Object*, and the *Subject Matter* of our Prayers? If *God* be every Day the same, and the *Subject Matter* of our Prayers, in the main, the same, why may we not every Day use the *same Set of Words*? His Reason is this, because, That is apt to make us *formal* and *cull*. Then we must take the more Care; and, if we beg the Assistance of the *Spirit*, he *can*, and *will*, as effectually assist our *Attention* and *Devotion* in the Use of the *same Set of Words*, as in the Use of *new* and *entertaining* Phrases. Nay, the *Understanding* can more readily attend to the *Sense* of the *same Set of Words*, than to *new* ones, where the Ear is constantly attending to *new Sounds*, and the *Fancy* to *new Images*. There is one fundamental Error that leads them into all the rest, *viz.* That *hearing* a Person pray, and being *affected* by what they hear, is *praying*. — No such Thing.

but I mean to do it as *inoffensively* as possibly I can; and, as to the *Argument*, I will as freely *retract* what I cannot *defend*, as I now advance it. To go on, therefore, to speak my Mind freely. I have in a former Chapter shewn, from the *Nature* of Prayer, that it is impossible for a *Congregation* to *join* in Prayer with a Person that uses a Prayer of which they knew nothing *beforehand*, any farther, than by giving their *Assent* to it by saying *Amen* at the Conclusion of it. Neither, indeed, do I see how *that* can be safely done, without a Persuasion that the Person prays by *Inspiration*. For, saying *Amen* to a Prayer, is declaring their Approbation of the *whole* and *every Part* of it, whereas they had not *Time* to *consider* and *weigh* every Part so fully as will warrant such an *absolute Assent*. But, at present, I wave these Points. I am now speaking about *Forms* of Prayer, and I repeat it again, that all *publick* Prayer must be a *Form* of Prayer to the *Congregation*. If the *Congregation* be under the *Necessity* of using a Prayer, the Use of that Prayer is *imposed* upon them, and they *are* under an *absolute* Necessity of using that or none; and if they be under the *Necessity* of using it without the Liberty of *varying* from any Part of it, it is a *Form* to *them*. If not, I should be much obliged to any one that would be at the trouble of teaching me *what* a *Form* of Prayer is. Now if this be a true State of the Case, (as it most certainly is) we have brought the Matter to this single *Question*, *viz.* Whether the *Dissenters* may not as safely use a *Form* drawn up by a

Committee of very learned, judicious, and pious Men, as by a *single* Person, let his Qualifications for praying be ever so great; and suffer the Use of it to be *imposed* upon them by *publick* Authority, as well as by the Authority of their *own* Teacher only. And this Argument is much strengthened, when we consider, what Dr. *Watts* acknowledges and bewails, the *Incapacity* of many of his *Brethren* for such an Exercise; the Crudeness and Jejuneness, and many other Defects of their Prayers. Indeed it *must* be so; as, no doubt, it would be in the *established Church*, if *all* the Clergy were to use Prayers of their *OWN composing*, after the manner of the *Dissenters*. This Argument, I confess, proceeds upon a *Postulatum* that *all* the Dissenters will not grant, *viz.* that *their* publick Prayers, and *ours*, are the *Compositions* of *human* Abilities, assisted only by the *common* and *ordinary* Influences of the *Holy Spirit*. The famous *Barklay* answers for the Body of the *Quakers*. He enters their Protest in the following Words, Pag. 348 of his *Apology*. “ But the *Li-* *Will-Worship.*  
“ *mitation* we condemn is, that  
“ whereas the *Spirit* of God should be the  
“ *immediate* Actor, Mover, Persuader, and In-  
“ fluencer of Man in the particular Acts of  
“ *Worship*, when the Saints are met together,  
“ this Spirit is *limited* in its Operations by set-  
“ ting up a particular Man, or Men, to teach  
“ and pray, in *Man’s Will*; and all the rest  
“ are excluded from so much as believing that  
“ they are to wait for God’s Spirit to move  
“ them

“ them in such Things ; and so they neglecting  
 “ that which should quicken them in them-  
 “ selves, and not waiting to *feel* the Breathings  
 “ of *God's Spirit*, so as to obey them, are led  
 “ to depend merely upon the Preacher, and  
 “ hear what he will say.

*True teaching  
 of the Word  
 of God.*

“ *Secondly*, in that these peculiar  
 “ Men come not thither to meet  
 “ with the Lord, and to wait for  
 “ the inward Motions and Operations of his  
 “ *Spirit* ; and so *pray* as they *feel* the Spirit to  
 “ breathe *through* them, and *in* them ; and to  
 “ preach, as they find themselves acted and  
 “ moved by *God's Spirit*, and as *he* gives Utter-  
 “ ance, so as to speak a Word in Season to  
 “ refresh weary Souls, and as the present State  
 “ and Condition of the Peoples Hearts require,  
 “ suffering God by *his Spirit* both to *prepare*  
 “ Peoples Hearts, and also give the Preacher  
 “ to *speak* what may be fit and seasonable for  
 “ them ; but he hath *hammered* together, in  
 “ his Closet, according to his *own Will*, by  
 “ his *human Wisdom* and *Literature*, and by  
 “ stealing the Words of Truth from the Letter  
 “ of the Scriptures, and by patching together  
 “ other Mens Writings, so much as will hold  
 “ him speaking an Hour while the Glas runs ;  
 “ and without waiting and feeling the inward  
 “ Influence of the Spirit of God, he declaims  
 “ that by *hap-bazzard*, whether it be fit and sea-  
 “ sonable for the Peoples Condition, or no. and  
 “ when he has ended his Sermon, he saith his  
 “ Prayer also in his *own Will*, and *so there is an*  
 “ *end*

“ *end of the Business.*” For the Credit of *Christianity*, and the Honour of the *holy Spirit*, I am glad that this Gentleman wrote only in *Man’s Will*, by *hammering* his Book in his *Closet*, for he has not *stolen the Truth from the Letter of the Scriptures*, and it is *hap-bazzard* whether any of his Readers can tell what he means by the Spirit’s *quickenning them in themselves*, and *breathing through them, and in them*, &c. For my own part, I own myself *uninlightened* by such Phrases, and expect to remain in *Darkness*: Thus much, however I can understand from the *whole*, that the *Quakers* pretend to *preach and pray*, without any Assistance from *human Wisdom*, and *human Literature*, by the *immediate Inspiration* of the *Spirit*; first *moving* them to pray and preach, and afterwards *dictating* to them the *Matter*, the *Order*, and *Words*; in short, the *whole* of their *Prayers* and *Sermons*. This Gentleman wrote his *Apology* in the *Name of the Body of the Quakers*, and under the *Character* of a *Protestant*, while his Book is a *Refinement upon Popery*, and carries the *Claim to Infallibility* much higher than any of the *Papists* ever did. The *Papists* only assert that there is, somewhere, (for it is not yet determined where it rests) in their Church an *Infallible Judge of Controversies*, in order to preserve the *Peace of the Christian Society*; but no *Papists*, nor any body else before the Rise of *Quakerism*, ever maintained that any Man who has an *Imagination* warm enough to make him *fancy* that he *feels* the inward Motion, and Direction of the Spirit is *inspired* by him.

In *Modesty* and *Prudence* they ought to have better Proofs, to *themselves*, of their *Inspiration*, than a *fanciful feeling* of the *inward Breathings* of the Spirit; and I am sure the rest of the World must be *more* than *Imprudent* if they give them Credit without some such *external* Proofs, as the *Prophets* and *Apostles* gave, of their being *moved by the Holy Ghost*.

The rest of the Dissenters make no such large Pretensions to the Influence of the Spirit as these Men do; but they have a *general* Notion of their Teacher's *praying*, though not *preaching*, by the *Spirit*, and that their being tied up to the Use of *Forms* of Prayer would be *stinting* the Spirit, and making the Service only *Will-worship*. As this Opinion is grounded upon a mistaken Interpretation of some Texts of Scripture in *St. Paul's* Epistles; *Archbishop* Sharp, from those Words, *What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit, I will pray with the Understanding also*, 1 Cor. xiv. 15, has explained the several Texts with inimitable Perspicuity, and truly *Christian* Temper; and I cannot do better than to transcribe what he has said in his own Words. They are in Vol. the IVth, of his Sermons, Page 105.

‘ The Method I shall take in the discussing  
 ‘ this Point shall be to make out these four fol-  
 ‘ lowing Propositions; which if they can be  
 ‘ made out, all the Difficulty that seems to be  
 ‘ in this Argument does perfectly vanish.

‘ *First* of all therefore, I shall shew, that  
 ‘ praying by the Spirit in the Sense that the  
 ‘ Apostle meant, is so far from being a perpetual  
 ‘ Duty



‘ Duty requir’d of all Christians, that as far as we  
 ‘ know, no Christian now living can with Rea-  
 ‘ son pretend to that Gift.

‘ *Secondly*, I shall shew that That which is  
 ‘ now called praying by the Spirit, that is, the  
 ‘ conceiving of Prayers on a sudden without  
 ‘ Study and Premeditation, and expressing our  
 ‘ Conceptions with great Fluency and Moving-  
 ‘ ness of Words and Gestures, is so far from  
 ‘ being the immediate Effect of the Spirit of  
 ‘ God, that generally speaking it is the Effect  
 ‘ of Art or Industry, or a present Heat of Tem-  
 ‘ per.

‘ *Thirdly*, I shall shew, that if there be any  
 ‘ other Notion of praying by the Spirit in Scrip-  
 ‘ ture, such as is to be extended to all Times  
 ‘ and Ages of Christianity, and is not peculiar  
 ‘ to the Apostolical Age, that Notion will every  
 ‘ Jot as well fit and suit with set Forms of Prayer,  
 ‘ as with those Prayers that we call Extemporary.

‘ *Fourthly*, I shall shew, that though we  
 ‘ should suppose that God, even in these Days,  
 ‘ doth assist Men, both as to the Matter, and  
 ‘ even the Words of their Prayers, yet we have  
 ‘ more Reason to believe that the publick Pray-  
 ‘ ers of the Church were indicted and contrived  
 ‘ by that Spirit of God, than we have to believe  
 ‘ that any Man’s private Prayers are; and con-  
 ‘ sequently that when we use them, we pray as  
 ‘ much by the Spirit as when we use sudden  
 ‘ conceived Prayers.

‘ I begin with the first of these Propositions,  
 ‘ which is this, That praying by the Spirit in the  
 ‘ Sense

‘ Sense of the Text I am now upon (which in-  
 ‘ deed is the chief Text that gave Rise to this  
 ‘ Expression, and accordingly the Meaning of  
 ‘ the Expression ought to be governed by the  
 ‘ Meaning of the Text; I say, praying by the  
 ‘ Spirit, (as the Apostle here speaks of it) is so  
 ‘ far from being a perpetual Duty required of  
 ‘ all Christians, that it is much to be doubted  
 ‘ whether any Christian now living can with any  
 ‘ Reason pretend to that Gift.

‘ And the Reason is evident, because this was  
 ‘ one of the extraordinary miraculous Gifts,  
 ‘ which God for the gaining Credit to Christia-  
 ‘ nity, and supplying the Necessities of the then  
 ‘ Infant Church, was pleased to confer upon the  
 ‘ Apostles, and other Christians of that Age;  
 ‘ which Gifts as Christianity got footing in the  
 ‘ World, did by degrees wear out, and at last  
 ‘ perfectly ceased.

‘ Now that praying by the Spirit was one of  
 ‘ those extraordinary Graces, it is plain enough  
 ‘ from the whole Discourse of the Apostle in this  
 ‘ Chapter; for, according to him, praying with  
 ‘ the Spirit, and singing with the Spirit, and  
 ‘ blessing with the Spirit, are but so many fe-  
 ‘ veral Exercises of the Gift of Languages, or  
 ‘ that Power which the Christians then were  
 ‘ endowed with of speaking in unknown  
 ‘ Tongues, which they had never learned.

‘ I shall make the Matter very plain to you;  
 ‘ the Church of *Corinth*, to whom *St. Paul*  
 ‘ writes this Epistle, was at that Time favoured  
 ‘ with many eminent Gifts of the Spirit; but it  
 ‘ seems

' seems that several of those that had these Gifts,  
 ' did not make that Use of them, which they  
 ' were given for: For, whereas the Gift of  
 ' Tongues was chiefly bestowed for the Conver-  
 ' sion of Infidels, to be a Sign (as the Apostle  
 ' speaks in Verse the 22d of this Chapter) *not to*  
 ' *them that believe, but to them that believe not,*  
 ' these Men took a Pride in exercising this Gift  
 ' in the Christian Congregation, making Prayers,  
 ' and Hymns, and Thanksgivings at their publick  
 ' Meetings in a Language that the People under-  
 ' stood not, consequently from which they could  
 ' receive no Benefit. This Abuse now it is the  
 ' Design of the Apostle to reform, and at the  
 ' same Time to regulate the Exercise of their  
 ' other several Gifts; and the great Rule, which  
 ' he lays down in this Matter, is that all Things  
 ' in the Church ought to be done with Decency  
 ' and Order, and to the Edification of the Con-  
 ' gregation, and that no spiritual Gift is any fur-  
 ' ther valuable than as it is employed to the Be-  
 ' nefit of others; and consequently either let  
 ' them not at all make Use of their Gift of Lan-  
 ' guages in the Church, or if they will make  
 ' Use of it, let them either themselves, or some  
 ' other for them, interpret to the People what  
 ' they mean, so that the whole Congregation  
 ' may understand and be edified. If we now  
 ' take this Key, we shall have an easy Entrance  
 ' into the Sense of this whole Chapter.

' At this Time I shall concern myself with  
 ' no more of it, than what is needful for the  
 ' giving Light to my Text; let it be observed  
 ' there-

therefore that two Verses before my Text, the  
 Apostle gives this Advice, *viz.* in the 13th  
 Verse: *Wherefore, saith he, let him that speak-*  
*eth in an unknown Tongue,* (he means speaking  
 in the Christian Assemblies) *pray that he may*  
*interpret:* This Advice he backs with this  
 Reason, in the Verse before my Text: *For if*  
*I pray in an unknown Tongue, my Spirit pray-*  
*eth, but my understanding is unfruitful;* as if  
 he had said, the Necessity of speaking in a  
 known Tongue, or at least of interpreting  
 what is spoken in an unknown Tongue, doth  
 appear from hence; that if any of us do,  
 in the Congregation, pray, for Instance, in an  
 unknown Tongue, it is true, the Spirit within  
 him prayeth, or he doth indeed pray by the  
 Spirit; but nevertheless if he make none but  
 such Prayers, or do not interpret such when he  
 makes them, his Mind, his Meaning is un-  
 fruitful, yields no Profit to the Hearer, others  
 receive no Benefit, no Edification, by what he  
 prayeth; That is plainly the Sense of this Verse;  
 and then it follows in the Words of my Text,  
*What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit,*  
*I will pray with the Understanding also, I will*  
*sing with the Spirit, I will sing with the Under-*  
*standing also;* that is, if I do sometimes make  
 Use of the Gift of Tongues, that the Spirit  
 hath bestowed upon me, either in praying or  
 singing of Psalms; yet I will also take Care so  
 to pray and sing as to be understood; I will  
 not be so wholly taken up in singing and pray-  
 ing by the Spirit, but I will pray and sing also

as

' as others do, that have not that Gift of the  
 ' Spirit, that is, in a Language that the Con-  
 ' gregation understands as well as myself; or if  
 ' I do pray by the Spirit I will at least take Care  
 ' to interpret.

' That this is the true and only Sense here of  
 ' praying by the Spirit, and praying with the  
 ' Understanding, is undeniably plain from what  
 ' follows in the four next ensuing Verses; for  
 ' thus the Apostle goes on in Verses, 16, 17, 18,  
 ' 19; *Otherwise when thou shalt bless with the*  
 ' *Spirit, (that is praise God) how shall he that*  
 ' *occupieth the Room of the Unlearned, say Amen*  
 ' *at thy giving of Thanks, seeing he understandeth*  
 ' *not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest*  
 ' *Thanks well, but the other is not edified. I thank*  
 ' *my God I speak with Tongues more than you all,*  
 ' *yet, in the Church, I had rather speak five Words*  
 ' *with my Understanding, that by my Voice I might*  
 ' *teach others, than ten thousand Words in an un-*  
 ' *known Tongue.*

' You see here all along that speaking by the  
 ' Spirit, is speaking in an unknown Language,  
 ' and speaking with the Understanding is speak-  
 ' ing Words that others may understand: Taking  
 ' this now to be a true Account of the Text, (as  
 ' without doubt it is) we have got these four  
 ' Things by it.

' *First* of all in general, that the Gift of  
 ' praying by the Spirit was in the Number of  
 ' those miraculous extraordinary Gifts that were  
 ' in a plentiful Manner showered down by the  
 ' Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, upon this Day  
 ' of

of Pentecost, and by laying on their Hands communicated to others afterwards, during that Age.

*Secondly*, For the more particular Account of this Gift, it was a Branch of the Gift of Tongues, or rather to speak properly, it was one of the Instances by which the Gift of Languages was expressed.

*Thirdly*, That this Faculty of praying by the Spirit was so far from being the most useful or edifying, or the most desirable Gift in the Church, that *St. Paul* prefers Prophefing (that is the Gift of preaching or interpreting Scripture) far before it, as you may see in the four first Verses of this Chapter; nay, he prefers praying in the ordinary Way before praying by the Spirit, telling us, that he had rather speak five Words in the Church to be understood, than a thousand in a unknown Language, though yet that Language was inspired by the Spirit.

*Fourthly*, From all that has been said it appears, that no Man now living can with any greater Reason pretend to this Gift of praying by the Spirit, in the Sense the Apostle speaks of it, than he can to the Power of speaking strange Languages without ever having learnt them, or than he can to the Power of discovering Thoughts, or curing all Diseases, or foretelling Things to come, or any other of the spiritual Gifts that the Apostle here treats of.

But it may be asked, Is there no other Notion of praying by the Spirit than that we

' have now mentioned? Did not the Holy Spirit  
 ' of God furnish his Servants with Matter to pray  
 ' for in those Days, as well as Languages to pray  
 ' in? And did he not inspire them to pray in a  
 ' known Language, as well as in an unknown?  
 ' And this immediately, so that when they  
 ' prayed they might be truly said to be filled  
 ' with the Holy Ghost.

' I answer, perhaps, it might, nay, for my  
 ' part I think it probably was so; we have many  
 ' Reasons to incline us to believe that in the first  
 ' Age of Christianity, when the Church was  
 ' propagated and governed in an extraordinary  
 ' Way, and there were many sudden emergent  
 ' Necessities to be supplied, which could not at  
 ' that Time be provided for in a regular Way,  
 ' that God hath since taken care they shall be;  
 ' I say, it is very probable, that, as God did in-  
 ' spire some with a miraculous Gift of interpre-  
 ' ting Scripture, and applying Types and Pro-  
 ' phecies, and others with a Gift of composing  
 ' Psalms and Hymns for the Benefit of the  
 ' Church, and others with the Gift of foretel-  
 ' ling Things to come; he did others also with  
 ' the Gift of Prayer, prompting and enabling  
 ' them in an extraordinary Manner, to put up  
 ' such Petitions as their own Spirits could never  
 ' have suggested to them, but which were suit-  
 ' able to the present Necessities and Exigencies  
 ' of the Church; and of those Persons it may  
 ' truly be said, that they prayed by the Inspira-  
 ' tion of the Holy Ghost: And I must confess  
 ' of this Way of praying by the Spirit, I would  
 M ' interpret

‘ interpret that famous and difficult Passage of  
 ‘ St. Paul, in the eighth of the *Romans*, 26,  
 ‘ 27 Ver. where he hath these Words: *Like-*  
 ‘ *wise*, saith he, *the Spirit helpeth our Infirmi-*  
 ‘ *ties*; for we know not what we should pray for  
 ‘ as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh Inter-  
 ‘ cession for us with Groanings that cannot be ut-  
 ‘ tered; and he that searcheth the Heart knoweth  
 ‘ what is the Mind of the Spirit, because he  
 ‘ maketh Intercession for the Saints according to  
 ‘ the Will of God.

‘ It is plain that he is here speaking of those  
 ‘ that had the first Fruits of the Spirit; that is,  
 ‘ were endowed with extraordinary Gifts, such  
 ‘ as we have been all this while speaking of.  
 ‘ This appears from the twenty-third Verse, and  
 ‘ therefore it is most likely, that the Spirit’s  
 ‘ helping their Infirmities, and making Inter-  
 ‘ cession for them, was his extraordinary exci-  
 ‘ ting and directing some particular Persons to  
 ‘ put up Prayers for the Congregation, and in-  
 ‘ spiring them with strong Desires, and earnest  
 ‘ Groans after such and such Things; which  
 ‘ tho’ they could not fully comprehend the  
 ‘ Meaning of, yet God, who knew the Mind  
 ‘ of the Spirit, saw that they were for the good  
 ‘ of the Church.

‘ Thus I am sure St. *Chrysostom*, (the best In-  
 ‘ terpreter of Scripture of all the Ancients) ex-  
 ‘ pounds the Place, whose Words, because they  
 ‘ are remarkable, and give a clear Account of  
 ‘ the Text, I shall translate to you:

‘ Having



‘ Having named this Text, he tells us, “ That  
 “ it was a very obscure Passage, because many  
 “ of those Miracles, which were done in the  
 “ Time when St. *Paul* wrote that Epistle, were  
 “ now ceased in the World. Therefore, saith  
 “ he, in order to the opening the Sense of this  
 “ Place, it will be necessary to acquaint you with  
 “ the State of Things at that Time. Now what  
 “ was that? Why, God bestowed several Gifts  
 “ on all those that undertook the Profession of  
 “ Christianity; which Gifts were also called by  
 “ the Name of the Spirit. One, for Instance,  
 “ obtained the Gift of Prophecy, and did fore-  
 “ tel future Events; another had the Gift of  
 “ Wisdom, and instructed the People; another  
 “ had the Gift of Healing, and he cured the  
 “ Sick; another had the Gift of Power, and  
 “ he raised the Dead; another had the Gift of  
 “ Tongues, and he spake in several Languages.  
 “ Moreover, with all these there was a Gift of  
 “ Prayer, which is also called by the Name of  
 “ the Spirit; and he that had this, prayed for  
 “ all the Multitude: For, because, not know-  
 “ ing many of those Things which are good  
 “ for us, we desire those that are not (as it is  
 “ said here, we know not what to pray for as  
 “ we ought) the Gift of Prayer came upon  
 “ some Man; and he stood up in the Name of  
 “ all, to desire that which was good for the  
 “ Church in common, and taught others to do  
 “ it. And he that was thought worthy of this  
 “ Gift, stood with much Compunction, and  
 “ many Groans (such as prostrate Man’s Mind  
 “ before

“ before God) and asked those Things that were  
 “ for the publick Benefit; correspondent there-  
 “ unto, in our Time, is the Minister of the  
 “ Congregation, when he offers to God the  
 “ Prayers for the People.” Thus far *St. Chry-*  
*ſostom.*

‘ But now taking all this for granted, that  
 ‘ Men in those Days, especially the publick  
 ‘ Ministers of the Church, were thus immedi-  
 ‘ ately inspired by the Holy Ghost in their  
 ‘ Prayers for the Congregation, yet it doth not  
 ‘ from hence follow, that any Christian now ei-  
 ‘ ther is so inspired, or ought to expect it. For  
 ‘ this you see was one of the Charismata, one  
 ‘ of the spiritual Gifts peculiar to that Age; and  
 ‘ there is not the same Reason that it should be  
 ‘ vouchsafed now. And if any one would  
 ‘ make us believe he is endowed with such a  
 ‘ Gift, he ought, in Reason, to give us Evi-  
 ‘ dence of his having some of the other Gifts  
 ‘ that were then common in the Church. If he  
 ‘ can infallibly expound all difficult Passages of  
 ‘ Scripture, or read the Hebrew Bible in his  
 ‘ Mother Tongue, having yet never learned  
 ‘ that Language; then we may be inclined to  
 ‘ believe that he can pray by the Spirit, as those  
 ‘ apostolical Persons did.

‘ But what then is the Sense of *St. Paul*,  
 ‘ when he bids you not to quench the Spirit,  
 ‘ 1 *Ep. Theſſ.* v. 19. Is not this a Command  
 ‘ that concerns all Christians? And is not the  
 ‘ Meaning of it that they should not stifle the  
 ‘ Inspiration of the Spirit, when they are at  
 ‘ Prayers,

‘ Prayers, by any set Form, but freely speak as  
 ‘ the Spirit gives them Utterance ?

‘ I answer, that this Text also refers to those  
 ‘ extraordinary Gifts of the Spirit we have been  
 ‘ all this while speaking of, as appears by the  
 ‘ Precept which follows after, *Quench not the*  
 ‘ *Spirit, despise not Prophecy*. And therefore  
 ‘ it doth no way concern us, otherwise than  
 ‘ by way of Accommodation ; and the plain  
 ‘ Sense of it is no more than this, That those  
 ‘ Christians, whom God had blessed with those  
 ‘ miraculous Powers, whether they were the  
 ‘ Gifts of Healing, or of Tongues, or any of the  
 ‘ rest, they should be very careful that they did  
 ‘ not, either by their careless Life, or Neglect to  
 ‘ make use of them to good Purposes, occasion  
 ‘ God’s withdrawing of them : For if they made  
 ‘ an ill Use, or no Use of them, he that gave  
 ‘ them would take them away ; that heavenly  
 ‘ Fire of the Spirit would, by these means, be  
 ‘ extinguished in their Hearts.

‘ And thus much let it suffice to have spoken  
 ‘ to the first Point, which I have been the  
 ‘ longer upon, for the sake of explaining those  
 ‘ Texts of Scripture which have moved so many  
 ‘ Scruples in Mens Minds.

‘ *Secondly*, I now come to the second Point,  
 ‘ which is this ; that That which we are now-  
 ‘ a-days used to call praying by the Spirit, that  
 ‘ is the conceiving Prayers on a sudden, with-  
 ‘ out Study and Premeditation, and expressing  
 ‘ our Conceptions with great Fluency and Mov-  
 ‘ ingness of Speech and Action, is not often, as

‘ we are apt to take it, the immediate Effect of  
 ‘ the Spirit of God, and Inspiration; but gene-  
 ‘ rally speaking the Work of Art or Industry, or  
 ‘ the present Heat of a Man’s Head.

‘ Far am I here from disparaging the Gift of  
 ‘ voluntary and extemporary Prayer, or crying  
 ‘ down the Use of it; it is certainly, as all other  
 ‘ Accomplishments that a Man has, the very  
 ‘ Gift of God, and great Benefit may redound  
 ‘ both to a Man’s self, and others, by a prudent  
 ‘ and discreet Use of it; \* and much further am  
 ‘ I from denying the Necessity of the Holy  
 ‘ Spirit’s Concurrence, or Assistance in our  
 ‘ Prayers; on the contrary I believe, that who-  
 ‘ soever is not assisted by the Spirit when he  
 ‘ prays, cannot pray as he ought to do; and I  
 ‘ doubt not but those that pray with a Form,  
 ‘ and without one, if they be pious good Per-  
 ‘ sons, are assisted by the Spirit when they pray.  
 ‘ But this I say, the Faculty of praying plau-  
 ‘ sibly, fluently, and movingly, in an extempo-  
 ‘ rary Way, if we consider it in itself, is not,  
 ‘ in these Days, an inspired Gift, but rather a  
 ‘ Gift of Nature, or an Acquisition of Heart,  
 ‘ or rather to speak properly, a Gift acquired by  
 ‘ Art in a Person that has a Nature and Genius  
 ‘ fitted

‘ \* The Congregation may be *instructed* and *moved* by such  
 ‘ Prayers, as they are by a good *Sermon*, but they cannot join  
 ‘ with him in offering up, at the same Time, the several Parts  
 ‘ of his Prayer, because while he is praying, *i. e.* speaking to  
 ‘ God, they are employed in attending to what he says, and have  
 ‘ no Time to speak any Part of it in their own Minds to God, by  
 ‘ *directing* it to him, without which *Direction* of the Mind it can-  
 ‘ not be *Prayer*.’

‘ fitted for it ; my Reasons for this are very  
 ‘ briefly these :

‘ *First* of all, There are as certain Rules and  
 ‘ Methods for the attaining this Faculty of vo-  
 ‘ luntary extemporary Prayer, as there are for  
 ‘ the attaining any other Art or Science: The  
 ‘ Truth of this appears both from the Books  
 ‘ that have been written to teach Men the  
 ‘ Gift of praying, and the Experience of many  
 ‘ who have been eminent in this Gift, who, if  
 ‘ they be asked, cannot deny but that they  
 ‘ came by it in the same Way that they come by  
 ‘ other acquired Gifts, that is to say, by reading  
 ‘ the Word of God, and other divine Books,  
 ‘ by Study and Meditation, by well digesting in  
 ‘ their Minds the several Heads of Matter, that  
 ‘ are either to be confessed or prayed for, or  
 ‘ Thanks returned for them, by treasuring up  
 ‘ in their Memory out of the Scripture, and  
 ‘ other good Books, apt and fit Phrases for the  
 ‘ expressing these Matters ; and lastly, and prin-  
 ‘ cipally by much Use and Exercise ; and there  
 ‘ is no doubt but whoever uses this Method,  
 ‘ shall, in a little Time, attain to a competent  
 ‘ Skill, and Readiness in this Gift of extempo-  
 ‘ rary Prayer ; supposing that he hath but a suf-  
 ‘ ficient Stock of natural Parts, and a Genius  
 ‘ that lies that Way : I add these two last  
 ‘ Things, because every Art requires a peculiar  
 ‘ Capacity and Fitness of Temper in him that is  
 ‘ to learn it ; so that though it have in it certain  
 ‘ and fixed Maxims, and Precepts, and so is  
 ‘ teachable, yet it is not teachable to every Per-

' son, because every Person is not qualified with  
 ' natural Abilities for the learning it. There  
 ' are several that may prove very good Mathe-  
 ' maticians, that yet would make but very bad  
 ' Orators, because their Parts are suited very  
 ' well for one Science, but not so well for the  
 ' other, and this Rule holds in this very Gift  
 ' we are speaking of, as well as others. Those  
 ' that have a competent Memory, and a good  
 ' Assurance, and a ready Presence of Mind to  
 ' recollect Things on a sudden, and a Dexterity  
 ' in putting them handsomely together, and ex-  
 ' pressing their Conceptions easily and naturally ;  
 ' these are much better contrived in their Na-  
 ' tures for the Gift of Prayer, and shall much  
 ' sooner obtain it, than those whose natural  
 ' Talents lie another Way ; yet for all this, the  
 ' whole Thing is an Art notwithstanding.

' And that it is so, is, in the second Place,  
 ' very easily discoverable to any diligent Obser-  
 ' ver, even from the Way of the Management  
 ' and Performance of it: For if ever we have  
 ' given ourselves to observe the Prayers of this  
 ' Kind, we shall find that though the Speaker  
 ' doth not confine himself to any particular set  
 ' Form, but varies his Prayers every Time ; yet  
 ' in the Compass of a few Prayers, both the  
 ' same Heads of Matter will return, and the  
 ' very same Set of Phrases and Expressions like-  
 ' wise, though perhaps not marshalled just in  
 ' the same Method or Order ; so that any one  
 ' who has long been used to a particular Person,  
 ' may, upon the reading of a Prayer copied  
 ' from

' from his Mouth, be able to say without a Mis-  
 ' take this Prayer is of the Composure of such  
 ' a Man. If now this be true, doth it not  
 ' shew that the Gift of praying of a sudden,  
 ' is rather the Effect of Art and Use, than of  
 ' the immediate Inspiration of the Spirit? Nay!  
 ' is it not an Evidence that these Sort of Prayers  
 ' are not so sudden and extemporary as we take  
 ' them for? But are really owing to a set Form  
 ' or Scheme, both of Matter and Phrases, which  
 ' the Person that useth them hath fixed in his  
 ' Mind, though we discover it not?

' But, *Thirdly*, there is yet further Evidence,  
 ' that the Faculty of extemporary Prayer is not  
 ' from the immediate Inspiration of the Spirit,  
 ' but from something else; because those that  
 ' are happiest at this kind of Way, cannot al-  
 ' ways pray alike, but at several Times find a  
 ' great Difference in their Performances: Some-  
 ' times they can with great Freedom pour out  
 ' their Souls unto God, as the Word is, at other  
 ' Times they are much streightened in Spirit;  
 ' sometimes a great Plenty of Matter offers it-  
 ' self to them, and they can utter it with great  
 ' Volubility of Tongue, and Aptness of Ex-  
 ' pression, and excite strange Passions and Af-  
 ' fections in the Hearers; at other Times they  
 ' are barren and dry, and their Words come  
 ' with Difficulty; and whilst their Inventions  
 ' are at work, in searching for new Matter, they  
 ' are forced to fill up the intermediate Spaces  
 ' with such Words and Phrases as first come to  
 ' hand or are most at their Tongue's End, or  
 ' else

‘ else with the Repetition of the same Thing  
 ‘ over again. It is no Disparagement to any  
 ‘ Man’s Parts, sometimes to be reduced to these  
 ‘ Inconveniencies; for the eloquentest Man in  
 ‘ the World, if he speak without Premeditation,  
 ‘ and thinks himself obliged to speak a conside-  
 ‘ rable Time, cannot avoid them: But in the  
 ‘ mean time this is a shrewd Argument that  
 ‘ these kinds of Prayers are not incited or dic-  
 ‘ tated by the Holy Ghost; for he cannot be  
 ‘ supposed to be ever at a Loss for furnishing  
 ‘ those Tongues that he makes his Instruments,  
 ‘ with what is next to be spoken.

‘ But, *Fourthly*, if what has been said be not  
 ‘ true, if the Faculty of praying eloquently and  
 ‘ devoutly on a sudden, be not a natural Gift,  
 ‘ or acquired Art, but the immediate Inspira-  
 ‘ tion of the Spirit, as some of us have thought,  
 ‘ it will be a hard Matter to rid ourselves of se-  
 ‘ veral Consequences which we should be loth  
 ‘ to own.

‘ I only name these two, first, it will follow  
 ‘ from hence that all those Prayers, that are  
 ‘ made in this Way, have in them as much Di-  
 ‘ vinity, as much infallible Truth, and are of  
 ‘ as great Authority as the Word of God: And  
 ‘ that if they be put into Writing, they ought  
 ‘ to be as much revered by us, and by all  
 ‘ Christians, as the holy Scripture, for accord-  
 ‘ ing to this Doctrine, the Holy Ghost is as  
 ‘ much the Author of these as he is of the in-  
 ‘ spired Books.

‘ And,



‘ And, secondly, another Consequence of this  
 ‘ Doctrine is this, that upon Supposition hereof  
 ‘ we must be forced to father upon the Holy  
 ‘ Ghost, not only all the Indecencies, all the  
 ‘ Indiscretions, all the vain Repetitions, or Im-  
 ‘ pertinencies, that any extemporary Prayers that  
 ‘ have been put up in the Church have had in  
 ‘ them : But if there have been any thing worse  
 ‘ than these ; if ever any rude Language hath  
 ‘ been given to God Almighty ; if ever any false  
 ‘ Representations have been made of his Attri-  
 ‘ butes ; if ever any unsound Doctrines have  
 ‘ been couched in Prayer, tending to Faction, or  
 ‘ Rebellion, or the like ; all these Things must  
 ‘ have the Patronage of the Spirit, who must  
 ‘ be supposed to be the Author, or Inspirer of  
 ‘ them.

‘ But I take no Pleasure in mentioning these  
 ‘ Things, and therefore I will not insist upon  
 ‘ them, but pass on to the third general Propo-  
 ‘ sition I am to make out, and that is this : If  
 ‘ there be any other Notion of praying by the  
 ‘ Spirit in Scripture, such as is to be extended  
 ‘ to all Times and Ages of Christianity, and is  
 ‘ not peculiar to the first, that Notion will every  
 ‘ whit as well suit with Forms of Prayer, as  
 ‘ with these that are conceived upon the sudden  
 ‘ and present Occasion.

‘ There is a Spirit of Prayer spoken of in  
 ‘ Scripture, which I doubt not but God hath  
 ‘ endued, and doth and will endue his People  
 ‘ with unto the End of the World ; and per-  
 ‘ haps this Phrase of praying in the Spirit, or by  
 ‘ the

‘ the Spirit may, in one or two Texts, be used  
 ‘ in the same Signification: So that to pray by  
 ‘ the Spirit shall mean the same Thing as to  
 ‘ have the Spirit of Prayer; and in this Sense  
 ‘ nobody will question that praying by the Spirit  
 ‘ is a perpetual Duty, is of perpetual Use, and  
 ‘ denotes a perpetual Assistance of the holy Spi-  
 ‘ rit of God.

‘ But now what is this Spirit of Prayer?  
 ‘ Why nobody that reads the Scripture, and  
 ‘ considers how that Term is there used, but  
 ‘ will be satisfied that it imports neither more  
 ‘ nor less than the Grace of praying as we ought  
 ‘ to do: Just as the Spirit of Wisdom, the  
 ‘ Spirit of Knowledge, the Spirit of Truth, or  
 ‘ the Spirit of Meekness, are those several Graces  
 ‘ and Virtues of Wisdom, Knowledge, Truth,  
 ‘ and Meekness, that are wrought in us by the  
 ‘ Holy Spirit, so that whoever reverently and  
 ‘ humbly addresseth himself to God Almighty,  
 ‘ seriously acknowledging on one hand his own  
 ‘ Vileness, and Unworthiness, and manifold  
 ‘ Necessities; and on the other hand God’s in-  
 ‘ finite Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness;  
 ‘ professing to depend upon him entirely, dread-  
 ‘ ing his Displeasure; earnestly seeking his  
 ‘ Grace and Favour, and devoutly rendering  
 ‘ Thanks to him for all his Mercies; such a Man  
 ‘ hath the Spirit of Prayer. When he prays  
 ‘ with this Mind, with these Dispositions, with  
 ‘ these devout Affections, he truly prays by the  
 ‘ Spirit, because these Qualities are wrought in  
 ‘ him by the Spirit of God; he had not had  
 ‘ them

‘ them but thro’ the Influence and Assistance of  
 ‘ the Holy Ghost: But now what I beseech  
 ‘ you is all this, either to praying by a Form,  
 ‘ or praying in an extemporary Way? Why  
 ‘ may not I be thought to have these Qualifi-  
 ‘ cations, these devout Affections, this Ardor  
 ‘ and Fervency of Mind toward God, when  
 ‘ I pray in Words ready made to my Hands,  
 ‘ as well as when I pray in Words that I thought  
 ‘ not on before? And consequently why must  
 ‘ I be said to pray by the Spirit one way, and  
 ‘ not in the other? Add to this, in the last Place,  
 ‘ which is the fourth Proposition I am to speak  
 ‘ to, that though we should suppose that God,  
 ‘ even in these Days, doth assist Men both as  
 ‘ to the Matter, and even the Words of their  
 ‘ Prayers; yet we have as much Reason to be-  
 ‘ lieve that the publick Prayers of the Church  
 ‘ were indicted and contrived by that Spirit of  
 ‘ God, as we have to believe that any Man’s  
 ‘ private Prayers are; and consequently, that  
 ‘ when we use them we pray as much by the  
 ‘ Spirit, as when we use extemporary Prayer.

‘ This Proposition is so evident, that I need  
 ‘ speak very few Words towards the clearing of  
 ‘ it. The Thing lies here, whether is it not,  
 ‘ at least, as likely that when a Company of  
 ‘ learned, religious, devout Men, are met to-  
 ‘ gether, by the Command of Authority, to con-  
 ‘ sider of a publick standing Liturgy to be used  
 ‘ in the Church, and spare no Care, nor Pains,  
 ‘ nor Study, to form one as exactly as may be,  
 ‘ according to the Will of God declared in Holy  
 ‘ Scripture;

‘ Scripture ; and not only so, but earnestly de-  
 ‘ sire of God the Assistance and Direction of his  
 ‘ Spirit to go along with them in that Work : I  
 ‘ say, whether is it not at least as probable that  
 ‘ such Men as these, taking this Method, shall  
 ‘ be extraordinarily assisted by the Spirit in car-  
 ‘ rying on this Undertaking ? Nay, (and if the  
 ‘ Spirit now-a-days does vouchsafe such Inspira-  
 ‘ tions) shall be immediately inspired, both as  
 ‘ to the Matter and the Words that they agree  
 ‘ upon, as it is probable that a particular Person  
 ‘ that comes up in a Congregation shall, with-  
 ‘ out any Premeditation or Care of his, be thus  
 ‘ inspired ? Can we reasonably imagine that  
 ‘ God’s Spirit will indite a Prayer for this latter  
 ‘ Man, will dictate to him what he is to say,  
 ‘ and will take no care of the former, give  
 ‘ them no Assistance in the forming of their  
 ‘ Prayers ? Sure the Thing is inconceivable ! and  
 ‘ yet this is directly the Case of our Common-  
 ‘ Prayer on one hand, and extemporary publick  
 ‘ Prayer on the other ; so that if we will not be  
 ‘ partial in our giving Judgment, we ought to  
 ‘ think that when we pray by the publick Li-  
 ‘ turgy, we pray at least as much, if not more,  
 ‘ the Prayers of the Spirit, as when we go along  
 ‘ with a Man that uses his extemporary Faculty.  
 ‘ And thus I have gone through the four  
 ‘ Points I propos’d, and I hope by this Time  
 ‘ you are convinc’d what little Force there is  
 ‘ in all that Noise that has been made about  
 ‘ praying by the Spirit, to make us quit our  
 ‘ publick Liturgy for extemporary Prayer.’

Before

Before I quit this Head, should I say nothing of our *established Liturgy*, I might be suspected, perhaps, to have as mean, and as bad, an Opinion of it, as the Authors of the *Candid Inquisitions*; and, with them, to desire to see it *alter'd*, or rather to see a *new* one established in its room. I desire sincerely to be as *candid* in my *Remarks*, as they can possibly think themselves to be in their *Disquisitions*; and *their* Candor ought to make them believe me when I say so: But *Justice* intitles me to the Liberty of speaking my Mind as ingenuously, if I speak it as decently, as they have done. First of all, as to the *Candor* of their *Disquisitions*, I must be of Opinion, that whatever their *Intention* may be, their *Conduct* is not *quite* so candid as might have been expected on such an Occasion. There *seems* to be a stronger Inclination to raise *Objections*, than to *commend* our Liturgy. They have been industrious to collect together every Thing that has been urged against it, but not so forward to do Justice to its *allowed* Excellencies. It must be capable of Improvements, in some Particulars, as it is the Composition of *fallible* Men; but, with all its Faults and Defects, it has, *upon the whole*, been deemed, not only by the Members of *our own* Communion, but by *foreign Protestant* Churches, to be a most excellent one; as any one may see that will read *Durell's* Account of them. Had these Projectors been a little *more* candid in their *Censures*, and more moderate in their *Demands*, they would have been better intitled to the Attention of the *Legislature*;  
but,

but, should the Attempt succeed upon the Plan of *their Specimen*, many prudent Persons think, they have Reason to dread the Consequences of it upon the Peace of *Church and State*. They complain often of *Prejudice* in Favour of our present Liturgy; but, in my Judgment, they have taken a likely Method to *increase*, rather than *lessen* them; for when any Person, or Thing, is *unreasonably* decried, from a Spirit of generous Resentment, it creates more *Friends* than *Enemies*. As to *myself*, I can only *wish* and *pray*, that the Glory of God, and the general Good, may be most effectually promoted; but I am clearly of Opinion with good Archbishop *Sharp*, that we need not doubt but that we may be *saved* in the Use of our Liturgy as it is, and, therefore, I am not only contented with it, but thankful for it; though I should be much better pleased if some Alterations could be made without a *probable Hazard* of having it *worse* upon *the whole*. I pray God that our Attendance and Behaviour in the Use of it, may be answerable to its Excellency. To this End we must always pray with *Attention* and *Fervency*.

The first Thing requisite to the offering up Prayers acceptably, is *Attention of Mind*; and this is so essential a Part, that there can be no such Thing as *Prayer* without it: For, *Prayer* is an Act of the *Mind*, an Address of the *Soul* to God; and, therefore, if while we give our Attendance at Church, and *seem* to join in the Service by using the proper Gestures, and making our proper Responses; or, if when we pretend to pray in  
our

our *Closets*, our *Thoughts* are otherwise employed, we can no more be said to be *praying* all that Time, than a Thing could be said to pray that is moved by Wires, and artfully made to perform the same Actions, and pronounce the same Words. There can be no Difference between Sounds uttered, and Actions performed by such a *Machine*, and by a *Man*, unless the *Mind* of the Man accompanies the *Body*; then only it becomes a *rational Act*, when it expresses the *inward* Sentiments and Dispositions of the *Soul*, DIRECTED at that Time to *God*; and, unless it be a *rational Act*, it is impossible that it should be a *religious* one: So that we can have no Pretence to expect the *Benefits* of Prayer, when we do not in reality pray at all. If one of our Fellow-Creatures were to pronounce a Petition to us in the most submissive Posture, and with the most moving Tone, and we knew, at the same time, that he was *thinking* upon something else, we should hardly grant his Request. On the contrary, we should look upon his *dissembled* Application, as an Indignity that deserved our Resentment, rather than a kind Acceptance. And why should we imagine that the great God will accept of those *hypocritical Appearances*, as Acts of *Worship* deserving his favourable Regard, which would be rejected with Scorn and Anger by *Men* from one another? *Hypocrisy* consists in *seeming* or *pretending* to be what we are not; and while we are *repeating* any Part of the Service, our *Thoughts* at the same Time not accompanying our *Words* we *seem*, or *pretend*,

tend, to be *speaking*; that is, *directing* our *Minds* to God, when they are directed to another Object; we *appear* to be performing Acts of *internal* Humiliation, Adoration, Thanksgiving, or Application for Blessings, but in *reality* we are doing something else. This *feigned* and *counterfeit* Address must needs be highly provoking, as it is greatly affronting, to the *omniscient* God, who seeth all the Thoughts and Motions of our Soul. By such *Inattention* of Mind at our Prayers we not only lose our Title to all the Advantages which we might otherwise expect from them, but we turn them into *Sin*, and, instead of *Worship*, offer an *Insult* to the divine Majesty. I do not here speak only of such (and, I am afraid, some such do often attend the *outward* Service) who come not with any *Intention* of joining *inwardly* in their *Hearts*, but out of *Curiosity*, a prudent Regard to Decency, out of Custom, or Interest; but I likewise mean those who, tho' they *do* come to Church upon a *religious* Principle, and with a *general Design* of *praying* to God, do, nevertheless, for want of due Care, suffer their *Minds* frequently to wander from the Business of their Devotions, while perhaps their Lips may be employed in uttering the Words, and their Bodies comply with the required Gestures. Nay, I am afraid; there are some who, notwithstanding some *general Intention* of worshipping God by coming to Church, do nothing more than *barely* come thither, and add one to the Congregation, without concerning themselves at all in the Service. This is the  
highest



highest Degree of *Inattention* that any one can be guilty of, who comes with *any sort* of religious Design. But we are all of us guilty, whenever our *Thoughts* are engaged on any other Subject than that of our Prayers; and in proportion as we are *ostener*, or *longer*, during the Time of the Service, thinking of something else, we are so much the more inattentive, our Prayers are so much the more broken, unconnected, imperfect, and affrontive to God.

But not only our *Thoughts*, but our *Affections*, also, must be engaged in the Business of our Devotions. When we repeat the *Confession*, (for Instance) it is not enough that we have in our *Minds* the Thoughts which are expressed in the Words, and *direct* them to *God*, but our Minds must be suitably *affected*. When we confess our Sins to God, we must be sorry for them, and ashamed of them; we must be afraid of the Displeasure of our offended God, and anxiously solicitous to appease him. Without these Dispositions, the *Design* of Confession will never be answered: For, God does not require this Act of Worship for his *own sake*, but for *ours*: He, who sees our *Hearts*, does not want to be *informed* of our Sins, but he requires us to *acknowledge* them, that our Acknowledgment of them may be the Means of working in us a *Reformation*; which it always will be, as far as we confess our Sins with proper Dispositions of Mind. And thus it is with regard to all the other Parts of our Prayers. When the *Absolution* is pronounced, it should fill our Minds with

Comfort and Joy, to hear God declaring by his Minister, that if we have been sincere in the Profession of our *Repentance*, our Sins are pardoned through the Merits of *Christ's* Death. When we celebrate the *Praises* of God, we should not only *think* of those Attributes which we then laud and magnify, but be affected by them, that we may be the more ready to obey him, to trust in him, to love and imitate him, as far as such imperfect Creatures are capable of resembling the infinite Perfections of our Creator. When we *thank* God for his Blessings and Mercies, they not only ought to be the Subject of our *Thoughts* at that Time, but we should so think of them, and be so gratefully moved by them, as to be inclined to make suitable Returns of Love and Duty. Our *Intercessions* for others should be accompanied with Benevolence and Charity, and, then, this Exercise of our brotherly Love will be the Means of increasing it. By *praying* for them affectionately, we shall *love* and *serve* them more affectionately. When we ask any Thing of God in Prayer, we should do it with an Earnestness answerable to the great Importance of the Things that we desire. It was the *fervent*, that was the *effectual*, Prayer of the righteous Man that availed so much. Prayer without Ardency, is like Incense without Fire, that will never send up a sweet Perfume to Heaven. It is from the Strength and Fervor of the *Affections*, that Prayer hath its Life and Efficacy. To pray without having our *Affections* raised, is to offer up to God, I will not say, a lame and sickly

sickly Sacrifice, but a dead and polluted one. Have we *Passions* that actuate us on all other Occasions, and shall they be asleep and quite unactive, where the Objects of them are most affecting? Is it required that we should be grieved and confounded at the Thoughts of our Sins, and shall we *feel* none of these *inward* Movements when we confess them to *God*, the Person offended? Can we have an *awful* Sense of *God's* tremendous Perfections, and *feel* no awful Sensations when we acknowledge them? Can we have a *grateful* Sense of his Goodness to us, and *feel* no grateful Emotions when we thank him for his Blessings and Mercies? This is *unnatural, impossible*, contrary to all our Experience of *human Nature*, which must operate after the same Manner at our *Prayers* as it does at other Times; contrary to the Practice of holy Men recorded in Scripture; of *Jacob* when he wrestled with the Angel, and *made his Supplication* to him; of *Moses* when he prayed for Forgiveness for the *Israelites*; of *David* when *his Heart was hot within him*, when *the Fire kindled with an holy Flame* that burst out with Vehemency of Expression; of our *blessed Saviour*, who prayed to *God* in his Agony with *strong Crying and Tears*, and did *sweat great Drops of Blood*. Languid and spiritless Addresses are as contrary to *Precept*, as they are to *Nature* and *Examples*; for, we are commanded to *strive in Prayer*, to *pray exceedingly*, to *pray earnestly*, and to *labour fervently in Prayer*. Thus we must pray with our *Heart*, as well as our

*Understanding.* It cannot be *Prayer* unless we *speak* to God with our *Minds*, unless our *Thoughts* be *directed* to him ; so neither can our *Prayers* be *Devotions*, unless they be accompanied with *pious Affections*.

But tho' we all of us might, with due Care, pray with more *Attention* and *Devotion* than we have done ; yet, the very best Performances, of the very best of us, will be *imperfect* ones ; and, therefore, while I am endeavouring to awaken the Careless, and to quicken the Indolent, I must be careful, not to discourage the well-meaning *Christian*.

In the first Place, we, all of us, find a Difficulty in keeping our *Minds* fixed, for any considerable Time, upon an *invisible* Object. This Difficulty arises chiefly from our having been so constantly habituated to *sensible* Objects, that our *Thoughts* naturally direct themselves thither. As we have been so much accustomed to the Exercise of our *Senses*, and are perpetually surrounded with sensible Things, they are apt to ingross our *Attention*. But the Generality of Mankind, because they cannot see God with their bodily *Eyes*, find some Difficulty in directing their *Minds* to a Being of which they have no *Idea* ; and a greater Difficulty, still, in keeping them so directed for so long a Time as the Performance of this Duty requires.—And, therefore, the only Ways by which we can naturally acquire a proper *Attention* to our *Prayers*, and a Capacity of *directing* our *Minds* to God, the Object of them, must be, first, to accustom

our-

ourselves, at *other* Times, to think upon him, upon his Nature, Attributes, and Providence. This (as I have already observed under the Head of *short* Ejaculations) may be done, not only in our *Closets*, when the necessary Affairs of Life will permit us to retire for *Reading* and *Meditation*, but we may often do it while we are performing the Duties of our Station; not only when we are alone, but when we are in Company. In *all* Places there will be vacant Intervals, when we may employ our Thoughts on other Things besides those which concern our *worldly* Business, even while we are attending upon it. And, if at *other* Times we use ourselves to think of a Being who made us, and every Thing else about us; if we make the Thoughts of his providential Care over us, and tender Mercies towards us, *familiar* to us; if we often consider this our Relation and Obligation to him, and our Dependance upon him; but, withal, how unworthily, how undutifully, how ungratefully we have behaved towards this bountiful Lord and Master; I say, if we acquire a *Habit* of thinking in this Manner, we shall not find it so difficult to think of *God* in his *own House*, and to *direct* those Thoughts to him *there*, which we have accustomed ourselves to entertain in our Minds in *other* Places. But, if we never use ourselves to think upon *God*, and the *Subject Matter* of our *Prayers*, at any other Time than when we come to *Church*, or to *private* Prayers, we shall not be able to do it *then*. If we would be truly devout, we must

acquire a *Habit of Reflection*; I mean, this Kind of *practical Reflection*; for, a Man may have his Mind stored with great Variety of *Learning*, and be very *contemplative*, and yet as void of *pious Sentiments and Dispositions*, as the Man whose Thoughts are continually employed in a Circle of *Business, or Pleasure*, and, consequently, be as *inattentive and indelicate* at his Prayers.

But, farther, as soon as we enter the Church, or our Closet, we should immediately recollect ourselves that we are going to address *God*, and that we are immediately to banish from our Minds all other Thoughts whatsoever. And this constant Method of recollecting ourselves at our first Entrance into the Church, (which it is in every one's Power to follow) tho' it will not secure us from *all Wanderings*, yet will it be a considerable Help to us in fixing our Attention to the Business of our *Devotion*; especially, if we be careful not to divert our Attention *from* it by talking to others, or looking about upon external Objects, which will soon carry away our Thoughts along with them.

Speaking of the Difficulty of directing our Minds to *God*, as he is an *invisible Object*, a Friend of mine suggested a very ingenious Thought, *viz.* That as the *Man Christ Jesus* is PERSONALLY united with the *Godhead*, it might be of Use to some People, in order to fix their Attention, to direct their Devotions to *him*. Every one has an Idea of the *Person of Christ's Human Nature*, and may as easily direct their Minds to it, as we can direct them to the *Person*

son of any *other* Man, or as they prayed to *Christ* when he was on *Earth*; and the *Human* Nature being equally *united* to the *Divine* in *Heaven*, there can be no *Idolatry* in such *Worship* any more than there was *then*.

These are the only *natural* Ways, that I can think of, for *fixing our Attention*, and *directing* our *Minds* to *God*; without which, as I have observed to you, we cannot be said to *pray* to him, or have just *Grounds* to hope that he will pay any other *Regard* to our *Service*, than to punish us for the *Insincerity* of it. As to those *Dispositions* which ought to accompany our *Prayers*, in order to render them, in a proper *Sense*, *Devotion*, and an acceptable *Service*, we must not be *too much* discouraged at the frequent *Coldness* and *Languor* of our *Addresses*. The very same *Causes* which make it so difficult for us to keep our *Attention fixed*, make it difficult for us to pray with *Fervency*. Our habitual *Attention* and *Attachment* to worldly and sensual *Matters* take *Possession* of our *Hearts*, while they engage our *Thoughts*. Such an *Intimacy* with them naturally begets an *Affection* for them, which, in proportion to its *Strength*, will weaken our *spiritual Affections*. The more *passionately* we pursue, or enjoy, worldly and sensual *Pleasures*, the less we shall be affected with *heavenly Thoughts* and *Exercises*. These two *Passions* are directly opposite, and at continual *Variance* with one another; insomuch, that if we be *worldly-minded* and *sensual* in our *Disposition*, we shall be proportionably *indeavour* in our *Pray-*

ers to God, because our Affections are placed upon other Objects. And, God knows, such is the Corruption and Weakness of our Nature, since the Fall of *Adam*, such its strong Bias towards *worldly* and *sensual* Things, and so conversant are we with those Objects, naturally agreeable to us, that it is exceeding hard to keep ourselves from being too fond of them. But, if they *do engross* our Affections, our *Prayers* will be *lifeless* and *irksome*. And if we pray without *Devotion*, we shall pray without *Pleasure*, and be glad when it is over. But, these Difficulties, though I mention them as Reasons against *Despondency*, on account of the *Coldness* of our Devotions, yet they ought to be made Inducements to *Watchfulness* and *Industry*. While we are *Men*, we shall feel the Infirmities of *human Nature*; but, still, we must continually *strive* against them. While the Duties of our Station require us to be *conversant* with the *World*, we shall be *apt* to grow *worldly-minded*, and therefore we should be the more upon our Guard to secure our Hearts against their Enchantments. *God* is *invisible*, material Objects are constantly presenting themselves, and soliciting our Affections; for which Reasons we should be the more assiduous to *abstract* our Thoughts, and *lift* up our Hearts to God. The natural Means of doing this, I have already hinted to you under the Head of *Attention*. If we often *think* of God, his Attributes, and Dispensations, these Thoughts will tend to kindle pious Dispositions: If we acquire just Notions of his Perfections, we shall

*praise*



*praise* him with suitable Dispositions: A just Sense of his *Goodness* will infuse Gratitude and Joy into our *Thanksgivings*: If we apprehend what miserable Creatures we should all be without the Continuance of his *Bounty* and *Mercy*, this would make us importunate and earnest in our *Petitions* for temporal and spiritual Blessings: The Consciousness of our own Vileness, and God's Purity, will make our Confessions sorrowful and humble. This is the *natural* Way of acquiring *Fervency* and *Devotion* in our Prayers.

I can think of nothing, in the *natural* Way, more likely to make a Person *pious* and *devout*, than Mr. *Harvey's Meditations*, especially those upon the *Tombs* and the *Starry Heavens*, which are extremely *solemn*, yet adorn'd with such a Variety of beautiful Images, and enlivened with so much Ingenuity, that they are as *entertaining*, as they are *affecting*. I thankfully congratulate this very worthy Gentleman upon the Credit and Pleasure of having done so much Good, and being likely to do a great deal more.

But these *natural* Means *alone* will not do; God's Grace is necessary to assist our Endeavours; and, therefore, in all our *Prayers*, whether publick or private, we must first look up to God, and beg him to give us his Holy Spirit, to compose our Minds, to fix our Thoughts, and raise our Affections; which is the more needful by reason of the Artifices of our grand Deceiver, who, as he is watchful to obstruct all good Actions and Dispositions, so he will be more particularly

particularly industrious to hinder the Success of our Devotions, which are so acceptable to God, and so great a Means of Grace and Improvement. Against this strong Hold he will be sure to plant all his Batteries, and employ all his Stratagems; and, therefore, besides our utmost Vigilance and Endeavours to secure our Minds against his Suggestions, we must always, before we enter upon the Duty, most humbly and heartily implore the divine Assistance; and whenever we find our Thoughts wandering, and our Hearts growing cold and lifeless, we should immediately, in a short Ejaculation, apply ourselves to him who only can enable us to resist the Devil, that he may flee from us.

What I have said concerning *Attention* and *Fervency*, is equally applicable to *private* and *publick* Prayer, and is the Worship only of the *Mind*; but we must worship God with our *Bodies* also, that we may pay him the Devotion of our *whole Natures*. God has a Right to the Worship of our *Minds*, because he created them; and St. Paul commands us to *glorify him with our Bodies*, because he bought them with a Price, the Price of his *Blood*. I shall consider *bodily* Worship, as it relates to *publick* and *private* Prayer.

First, As it relates to *publick* Prayer.

Now the Design of *bodily* Worship in a *Congregation*, being to express to *others* the *inward* Worship of the *Mind*, we must do it by such *outward* Tokens as by *Nature* and *Custom* are the common Significations of it. I say *Nature* and  
*Custom*;

*Custom*; for, *some* external Expressions of our *inward* Sentiments and Affections, are as *unalterable* as our *Natures*, while others are of *arbitrary* Institution by an *Agreement* amongst ourselves. All *external* Expressions of our Thoughts may be brought under the three following Heads, our *Looks*, our *Voices*, and our *Gestures*. The two first are the *unalterable* Language of *Nature*, the last, of *human Institution* by *Agreement*. In *all* of them we must express the Sentiments and Dispositions of the *Mind*, in the same Manner at our *Devotions*, as we express them at *other* Times, or else we do not *manifest* them to *others*, which is the Intention of *external* Worship. By this *unerring* Rule let us examine our Behaviour at our *publick* Devotions.

First, as to our *Looks*. Dr. *Watts* has expressed himself so pertinently and handsomely upon this Point, that I will not undertake to express myself better, and therefore I shall give the Reader the Passage in the Doctor's own Words, Page 80. " In the *Face* the *God of Nature* has  
 " written various Indications of the Temper of  
 " the *Mind*, and especially when it is moved by  
 " any warm Affection. In divine Worship the  
 " whole Visage should be compos'd to Gravity  
 " and Solemnity, to express a holy Awe and  
 " Reverence of the divine Majesty of God, and  
 " the high Importance of the Work wherein  
 " we are engag'd. In *Confession of Sin*, while  
 " we express the Sorrows of our Soul, Melan-  
 " choly will appear in our Countenances; the  
 " Dejection of the Mind may be read there, and,  
 " according

“ according to the Language of Scripture, *Shame*  
 “ and *Confusion* will cover our Faces. The hum-  
 “ ble Sinner *blushes* before God at the Remem-  
 “ brance of his Guilt, *Jer.* li. 51. *Ezra* ix. 6.  
 “ Fervency in our Petitions, and holy Joy when  
 “ we give Thanks to God for his Mercies, and  
 “ rejoice in our highest Hope, will be discovered  
 “ by very agreeable and pleasing *Traces* in the  
 “ *Features and Countenance.*” This Observa-  
 tion of the pious and ingenious Author is so  
 true, that where there are *no* Appearances of  
 these Passions in the *Countenance*, we have no  
 reason to think that the Passions are, at that Time,  
 in the *Mind*; and, the stronger the Passions, the  
 stronger will be those Appearances, which are  
 the natural *Indications*, because they are the nat-  
 ural *Effects*, of them. *Intenseness*, *Earnestness*,  
 and *Anxiety* of Mind for the Success of our  
 Prayers will shew themselves in a *steady Eye*,  
 and a *fixed Composure* of the *Features*. Observe  
 any Man when he is *intent* upon any difficult  
 Point of Learning, or settling an intricate Ac-  
 count, that requires close Application of *Thought*,  
 and you may read his Attention very legibly in  
 his *Looks*. Observe another that is going upon  
 some Business of the last Consequence to him,  
 and you may see that the *Event* engrosses the  
 whole Man; you may pass by him, and he will  
 not see you; you may speak to him, and he  
 will not hear you; all the Senses are locked up;  
*external* Objects can get no Admittance. But  
 let any one go into a *Church*, and take a View  
 of the *Countenances* of the Congregation, will he  
 be

be able to read, in the Generality of them, this Intenfeness of Thought, and the proper Passions that ought to be excited at our Devotions? Far otherwise: You may read the utmost *Inattention* and *Unconcernedness*. Hypocrites may be able to counterfeit these Appearances, and may deceive us, but it is impossible that we should be deceived where People do *not* appear to be attentive and devout, because *Nature*, where there is not a forceable Restraint put upon it, will shew itself by these outward Signs. True Piety is naturally modest, and *will* offer some Violence to itself, as to the *outward Appearances* of it, lest the Sincerity of the *Heart* should be suspected. Upon this Head I shall be beholden to Dr. *Watts* for another very pertinent Passage in the same Page. “ But here let us take heed  
“ that we do not expose ourselves to the Cen-  
“ sure of our Saviour, who reproved the *Pha-*  
“ *risees* for disfiguring their Faces all that Day  
“ which they set apart for secret Fasting and  
“ Prayer. While we are engaged in the very  
“ Duty, some decent Appearances of the Devo-  
“ tion of the Mind in the Countenance are very  
“ natural and proper; but at the same Time it  
“ is best that those Discoveries, or Characters,  
“ of the Countenance, fall below, and stay be-  
“ hind, the inward Affections of the Mind, ra-  
“ ther than rise too high, or go before. The  
“ Devotion of our Hearts should be warmer and  
“ stronger than that of our Faces; and we  
“ should have a care of all irregular and disa-  
“ greeable *Distortions of the Face*, which some-  
“ times

“ times may tempt our Fellow-worshippers  
 “ to Disgust; as well as, on the other hand,  
 “ avoid *Yawning*, and an Air of *Listlessness*.  
 “ To lift up the Eyes to Heaven is very natu-  
 “ tural, and therefore the Psalmist very often  
 “ mentions it; though sometimes, under great  
 “ Dejection of Spirit and Concern for Sin, it is  
 “ very decent, with the *Publican*, to look  
 “ down: But, above all, a *roving Eye* ought to  
 “ be avoided in Prayer.” Upon this Account  
 he recommends keeping the Eyes closed, lest  
 the Objects that occur to the Sight should divert  
 the Attention of the Mind. This Rule may be  
 of Use to some; but in *our* Worship there is  
 another that may be as useful, and that is, look-  
 ing all the while in the *Common-prayer-book*.

The next *external* Token of the inward De-  
 votion of the Mind is, the *Tone* of the *Voice*; every  
 Passion has its peculiar manner of expressing  
 itself; *Joy*, *Grief*, and *Humility*, have their  
 proper Accident, which may be *imitated*, but  
 cannot be *altered* where the Passion is *real*. A  
 true Penitent will confess his Sins in a *mournful*  
*Tone*: If his Mind be duly affected with the  
 Sense of his Guilt and Danger, he must speak  
 with the *Voice* of Sorrow and Fear; when his  
 Mouth praiseth God, he will do it, as *David*  
 did, with *joyful* Lips; there will be an Eleva-  
 tion of *Voice*, as well as of the *Soul*. To use an-  
 other Expression of the Psalmist, He will praise  
 God *lustily*, and *with a good Courage*: The Rea-  
 son why there is such a *Faintness* and *Languor* in  
 the Voices of *modern* Congregations is, because  
 they

they are not *inwardly affected*, as they ought to be. They who give an Account of the *primitive Christians* at their publick Devotions, tell us, that their *Responses* were like the Voice of *many Waters*, and their *Amen* like a *Clap of Thunder*. There are two Extreams that ought to be avoided ; there is a modest Decorum to be preserved in the *Voice*, as well as in the *Looks* ; To be too *noisy*, much louder than the Congregation, or to speak with an *unnatural Tone*, looks like *Affectation* ; not to make the *Responses*, and *repeat* those Parts which the *Congregation* is directed, by the *Rubricks*, to repeat, or to speak so low as not to be heard, is not *joining* in the Service ; neither, indeed, is their *silent Attendance* *publick* Worship : And, if they *do* repeat any Part of the Service with any Degree of *inward Fervency*, it will appear in the *Tone* of the Voice. This is *unavoidable* ; it is *Nature*.

Proper *Gestures* of the Body come next under Consideration ; these, in some measure, depend upon *Custom* ; but *Reason* directs us to the Use of such as are most expressive of those Dispositions of the Mind, which ought to accompany our Prayers : We must be careful not to fall short of those outward Testimonies of Respect which we shew to any of our *Fellow-creatures* ;— PROSTRATION, or falling flat upon the Face, before great Personages, was the antient Usage in the Times of the *Patriarchs*, and therefore it was the Posture which pious People then frequently used in their *Worship* : But this Posture not being the Practice of *our* Times when we approach

proach the Presence of earthly Princes, and other great Persons, it is sufficient for the Purposes of *publick Worship* if we use the *bigbest* Tokens of Reverence that are customary on *other* Occasions. *Kneeling* is now the Posture most in use, and *Nature* seems to have dictated and led Mankind to it, as an Expression of Humility, and a Sense of our Wants, and Dependence upon the Person before whom we kneel: This Posture has been practised in all Ages and Nations, even where the Light of Revelation never shined.— But, *standing* is a Posture not *unfit* for Worship, (especially in our *Praises* and *Thanksgivings*, and in Places where there is not Convenience for the humbler Gesture of *Kneeling*) as it is a Token of Esteem and Honour for any Person to stand up when we speak to him. Both these Postures are used in *our* publick Worship, in different Parts of it; but, as far as our bad Custom of having *Pews* will admit of it, *all* the Congregation ought to Use the *same* Posture in *every* Part, in order to make our Worship compleatly *joint* Worship.—But *sitting* never was in any Age, or Country, used as a Posture of *Worship*, where People's Health and Strength would admit of any other; neither is it admitted in our Churches during any Part of the *Prayers*, but only while the *Lessons* are read; though the *Indevotion* of many People practise it while the *Psalms* are *singing*: I would ask such People, whether celebrating the *Praises* of our *Creator* be not as much an Act of *Adoration* as any other Part of our Worship? and whether they  
can



can seriously think *sitting* to be a proper Posture for *Adoration*. In order to convince them of their *irreverent* and *absurd* Behaviour, I would desire them to go to Court with a *complimental Address* to his *Majesty*, and when they come before the *Throne* to take a Chair and sit down, in a familiar Manner, to deliver it. The Consequence, I trow, would be, that they would be immediately ordered to withdraw, and not presume to approach his Presence any more till they had learn'd more *Manners*. And what is *God* that he should be treated with less Ceremony than one of his *own Creatures*? One would hardly think a *civilized* Person capable of such *gross Rudeness*, where the highest, the most awful Reverence is due.—There are others who, when they are upon their *Knees*, will lay their *Bodies* along upon the *Seat*. I would desire *these* careless Worshippers also to fancy themselves upon their *Knees* before the *King* to beg their Life, or some very great Favour, or to return him *Thanks*, would they behave to *him* in such a Manner as they behave to their *Maker and Judge*? Cases of *Weakness* of *Body* are out of the Question. *God* will have *Mercy* and not *Sacrifice*. But, in such a Case, when they find themselves in Danger of fainting, or being sick, by *kneeling*, and must change their Posture, if I might advise, they should *stand* till they can recover themselves; or if they be not able to bear that Posture neither, in my Opinion they had better sit down a while, and as soon as they can, fall upon their *Knees* again. My Reason is this:

It will shew the Congregation that they change their Posture out of *Necessity*; whereas resting their Bodies upon the Seat in a Posture of *Ease*, looks too much like *Sloth* and *Indolence*. But, whatever the Posture be, whether *kneeling*, *standing*, or *sitting*, the Body should be *upright*; not *leaning* and *lolling*, in such a Manner as would be thought *indecent* in company with our *Betters*, or even our *Equals*, if they be *well-bred* Persons: And therefore, in order to judge of the *Propriety* of our Behaviour at *Church*, we should consider whether we should think it decent in any other Place where we meant to shew *Respect*. For what is esteemed *Ill-manners* towards one another, in any other publick Company, must be highly *irreverent* in *publick Worship*. I mentioned the Inconveniency of having *Pews* in our Churches, because more People are frequently crouded into them than can possibly *kneel*. But another bad Custom is practised by some Persons of *Fashion* (by way of *Distinction*, I suppose) in building their Pews so very high, that unless they stand up, it is impossible for the *Congregation* to see *what* Postures they use. This is destroying the *very Nature* of *publick Worship*, for it cannot be *publick* unless it be *visible*, nor have the intended Effect; besides that it gives greater Opportunities for *Laziness* and *Leaning*. “ *The lifting up of the Hands*, sometimes folded together, and sometimes apart, “ is a very natural Expression of our seeking “ Help from God. The Elevation of the *Eyes* “ and *Hands*, is so much the Dictate of *Nature* “ in

“ in all Acts of Worship wherein we address  
 “ God, that the Heathens themselves frequent-  
 “ ly practised it, as we have an Account in  
 “ their several Writers, as well as we find it  
 “ mentioned in *holy Scripture* as the Practice of  
 “ the *Saints*.” See *Watts*, pag. 82. What the  
 Practice of the *Dissenters* is, I never had the  
 Opportunity of knowing; but with *us* it is hard-  
 ly ever used, as far as I have observed. I have  
 one general Observation to make upon *bodily*  
*Worship* in *publick*, which is this: Our Beha-  
 viour ought to be such, that if a *deaf* Person  
 were to be carried into a *Church*, not knowing  
 it to be a Place of *Worship*, he might immedi-  
 ately tell, by the *Looks* and the *Gestures* of the  
 Congregation, what they were doing. I shall  
 conclude this Part with a few general Remarks  
 that may be of Use.

I observed that People are not to speak *aloud*  
 such Parts of the Service as the Rubricks direct  
 the Congregation to repeat; but there are *some*  
 Parts that are improper to be repeated at all by  
 the *Congregation*, either *aloud* or *softly*. As for  
 Instance, the *Commandments* and the *Absolution*,  
 because they are spoken by the *Minister* in the  
 Name of *God* to the *People*, and therefore very  
 improper to be spoken by the *People* to them-  
 selves. But, at the *Conclusion*, they are to say  
*Amen*, i. e. *so be it*. There is the same Absur-  
 dity in the *People's* repeating after the *Minister*  
 the *Benediction*, because he *directs* it, in the  
 Name, and by the Authority of *God*, to them.  
 So likewise it is as to those Words which the

Minister pronounces when he consecrates the Elements at the SACRAMENTS, when he *christens* a Person, and delivers the Bread and Wine at the Lord's Supper. These are such Acts as suppose a *particular Commission*, in the Person who pronounces them, so to do, and therefore not to be repeated by the People who have *no* such Commission.

Another Practice I have observed in some, which tho' it be not such an *Absurdity* as the other, is an *Impropriety*, as it is a Disturbance to others who are within hearing; I mean, repeating *aloud*, after the Minister, or together *with* him, the Collects, and such other Parts as the Congregation is *not* directed so to repeat. This, unless it were done by the *whole* Congregation, cannot but occasion some Confusion, and interrupt the Attention of all that hear them.

But what I would most particularly recommend is, the coming to Church before the Service is begun. It is a common Fault in *most*, nay *all* the Congregations that I have ever yet seen, to come *after*, especially in a *Morning*; insomuch, that let the Hour of Prayer be what it will, there is seldom above half of the Congregation present at the *Beginning*, but they are dropping in during the greatest Part of the Service. This is a most monstrous Practice, both in respect to the *Persons themselves*, and the rest of the Congregation. In respect to the *Persons themselves*, it makes a great Defect in their Prayers, as they lose so much of the Service, and the *most material* Part of all, the *Confession*. What  
Part

Part of our Prayers can be of so much Consequence, as that which is necessary to the Success of all the rest? How can we expect that our Praises, our Thanksgivings, and Petitions, should be acceptable to God, till we have made our Peace with him by *confessing our Sins*, asking Pardon for them, and promising Amendment? So much *Wisdom* did the Compilers of the Liturgy shew in making that the *Beginning* of our Prayers; and so much *Folly* do they shew, who lose the Benefit of it by not coming in time. In respect to the *rest* of the Congregation, it is a very great *Indecency* and *Disturbance*, interrupts their Attention, and hinders their Devotion. To come into an Assembly while they are all engaged in any *temporal* Business of Importance, would be justly reckoned a very rude and impertinent Disturbance; but, to interrupt the Business of our Homage to our God, is a very great Affront to the Deity whom we are worshipping, and a great Piece of ill Manners, and Offence to the whole Congregation; and the more so, because they have not Patience to wait at the Door for the most favourable Opportunity of going into their Pew, and will not be content to take their Seat in order as they come, but oblige People to rise from their Knees, perhaps in the midst of the most solemn Part of their Devotions, that they may get to their Place of *Precedency*. But how absurd is it for People to affect *Superiority* when they are met together in a Capacity that puts us all upon a *Level*? Not to shew their *Breed-*

*ing* but *Devotion*. And how shocking must it be to a pious Soul, to be thus interrupted in its Conversation with its Maker upon Matters of the last Importance! Only imagine yourself going in such a Manner to join with your Fellow-subjects in an humble Petition for the Pardon of some capital Crime, or the Continuance of certain Privileges upon which the Happiness of your whole Life depends, and then judge whether you would think it *prudent* to go after Part of the Petition was read, or *decent* to interrupt the Business by the Noise that you must make by going in; and to oblige others to rise from their Knees that you might get nearer to the Throne. I cannot say any thing more convincing and affecting; I wish I could.

I must say something concerning the right Manner of performing *private* Worship, and I have done.

1. What has been said concerning *Attention* at our Prayers, respects the *Closet* and the *Church* equally alike, the *Nature* of the Duty being the same in both Places, and the Attention of the Mind being necessary to make it *speaking* to God, or *conversing* with him. For, if we have been ever so long upon our Knees in our *Closet*, and repeated ever so many Words with our *Mouths*, unless our *Hearts* at the same Time were directed to God, we did not *pray*, because *Prayer* is an Act of the SOUL *speaking* its Thoughts to God.

2. So, likewise, *Fervency* in Prayer belongs equally to *private* and *publick* Prayer. The  
Object

*Object* of our Prayers, and the *subject Matter* of them, being the same in the *Closet* and at *Church*, the same Affections and Dispositions ought to accompany our Prayers in both Places. We should magnify God's Perfections with the same awful Admiration ; confess our Sins with the same Humility and Sorrow ; beg God's Mercies and Blessings with the same Earnestness ; acknowledge those which we have received, with the same Gratitude and Joy ; and intercede for our Brethren with the same Affection in our *private*, as in our *publick* Prayers.

3. As to the Use of the *Voice* in *private* Prayer, I have but one Direction to give about it, and that is, that we take care that nobody bears us pray in our *Closet*, which would destroy the *Nature* and *Ends* of *Privacy* in our Prayers, and is contrary to the Command for praying in *secret* ; for we might as well leave the Door of our *Closet* open, and let Men see us pray, as let them bear us. But the Point of *Privacy* or *Secrecy*, being secured, perhaps, with many Persons, *speaking* the Words may be a Means of fixing the Attention, and increasing their Fervency.

4. Again, fourthly, *Reverence of Behaviour* in Prayer respects the *Closet* as much as the *Church*. God has a Right to the Homage of the whole Man in both Places, and *bodily Gestures* have, alike in both Places, a natural Tendency to improve those Conceptions which we ought to have of God, and those Affections which we ought to have towards him. Let not any there-  
fore

fore imagine, that in *private* they may pray as well in their *Chair*, or in their *Beds*, as on their *Knees*, because *Kneeling* being by Custom a Posture of *Respect* and *Humiliation*, the Use of it will be a Help to the *Soul* in improving our *inward* Reverence. I do not mean that nobody ought *occasionally* to lift up their Hearts to God in *any* other Posture than *kneeling* or *standing*, for good People frequently do it in *all* Postures; but we must, in our *stated* and *set* Times of Prayer in our *Closet*, use *bodily* Reverence, and pray in the most *humble* Posture; and, if we accustom ourselves to a slovenly and careless Behaviour in our *private* Prayers, we shall soon find our *inward* Reverence for God begin to decay. The Affections of the Mind are wonderfully raised and enlarged by the Motions of the Body, and bodily Gestures avail much in blowing up the Fervour of our Spirits into a holy Flame. Now, in our *Closets*, where we are concealed from outward Observation, we may use such Gestures as will be the most affecting, without giving Encouragement to our own Vanity and Ostentation, or the least Suspicion of our Sincerity to others, by the *Singularity* of our Behaviour. Dr. *Watts*, speaking of that Act of Worship which we exercise *before*, and *after Meals*, is of Opinion that we need not rise from our Seat when we perform it *alone*. I must differ from this sensible and pious Writer, because these are not *occasional Ejaculations*, but *set* and *stated* Acts of Worship, and ought to be performed with more Reverence, as well as any other



other *stated* Act of *private* Prayer. Thus, by God's Help, I have finished (as well as my Ability and Condition would permit) a Discourse upon the most solemn and seasonable Subject of Prayer; May God's Grace make it useful. *Amen.*

A  
DISCOURSE

ON THE

SACRAMENT of the *Lord's-Supper*.

NOTwithstanding the great Number of Books upon this plain Institution, and many of them written by very learned and able Men, I must be of Opinion that there is still Room to add something that may be of Use; however, if the Reader should be disappointed he shall lose but little time; for, every thing that is necessary for *Christians in general* to know concerning this Matter may be brought into a very narrow Compass. It is a common Excuse, with Persons of no Education, that they never had any *Learning*, and are not able to *qualify* themselves for the Sacrament; but, what a blasphemous Notion do these People entertain of God, by supposing him to have instituted an Ordinance for the Use of *all Christians*, which, by much, the greatest Part of them are not capable of *understanding*. As I have nothing, at present, to do with the *Quakers*, I may venture to take it for granted that our Saviour instituted this as an *external Rite* for the Use of all his *Followers*, to the *End of the World*. As there is nothing in the Words of the Institution that is *peculiar* to the

the

the Circumstances of the *Apostles*, but equally applicable to *all* Christians, so the *End* and *Design* of the Institution concerns *all* *Christ's* Disciples; it was to *commemorate* his Death, and this till he should come the second Time in order to *Judgment*: So *St. Paul* expressly declares, 1. *Cor.* xi. 26. We have then as *positive a Command* for the *universal* Observance of it, as we have for the Observance of any other Precept in the Bible, and consequently it is of as *universal*, and *indispensable* Obligation. What makes any thing a *Duty*, is, its being the *Will* of *God* that we should do it? What makes any thing sinful is, its being a *Violation* of his *Will*. *Omitting* to do a thing that *God* has expressly *required*, is, in its *Nature*, equally a *Violation* of his *Will*, and equally a *Sin*. I shall probably shock some of my Readers (as I did once before in my Discourse upon the Duty of *keeping the whole Law*) by asserting that a *Christian* can no more justify his *deliberately* living in the *habitual* Neglect of this *Sacrament*, than he can justify living in the *Habit* of any known Act of *Immorality*: If any one denies this, I ask him whether *Disobedience* to *God's* Commands be not a *Sin*; whether *omitting* to do what *God* has *absolutely* required, be not as much an Act of *Disobedience*, as *doing* what *God* has *absolutely* forbidden. Nay it is, in reality, as much an *immoral* Act as *Intemperance*, or *Whoredom*, forasmuch as it is a Breach of our *Rule of Action*, which is the *Will* of *God*: This is undeniably true; and, if it be, it deserves to be well considered by those who are so easy under  
the

the *habitual Neglect* of this *positive Command*. This is a short Answer to all the Objections that ever *were* made, or *can* be made against receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper; for, there can be no *reasonable Excuse* for *not* doing a Thing which is *absolutely necessary* to be done; neither can the Danger of receiving it *unworthily* be greater than the Danger of *habitually neglecting* it. The only *rational Use* that can be made of the *Sinfulness*, and *Danger* of being *unworthy* Partakers is, to be careful rightly to inform ourselves concerning the *Nature* of this holy Institution, and the proper *Qualifications* for a due Reception of it, and not to add to the Number of our Sins, the *damnable Sin* of *habitual Disobedience*. The *Prayers of the Wicked are an Abomination to the Lord*, and People may perform any other Act of *Christian Worship* in a *sinful Manner*, which will be *damnable* unless we repent of it; but who in his Senses would argue, from the Danger of *praying unworthily*, to the Wisdom of *totally neglecting to pray*, which would be as *damnable* a Sin as a Man can be guilty of: This would be full as *rational* as it would be for a Man to *kill himself for fear of dying*; he *damns himself*, for fear of *being damned*.

2. This Argument will be very much strengthened by considering this *Christian Rite* as successive to the *Jewish Passover*, and comparing them together. The *Passover* was a *Memorial* of the Deliverance of the *Jews* from their *Egyptian Slavery*; it was an *Ordinance* for the *whole Nation*; an *Ordinance for ever*; so strictly enjoined,

enjoined, that whoever neglected it, *that Soul was to be cut off*, not suffered to enjoy the *Benefits* of the Deliverance. The Sacrament of the *Lord's-Supper*, our *eucharistical Feast*, is an Ordinance in Memory of our Deliverance from *Sin* and *Death*, by the Blood of *Christ*. Now, as the *Passover* was an Institution of *universal*, and *perpetual Obligation*, the *Christian Rite* which was appointed in the *room* of it, must be as *extensive*, and as *lasting*, in its *Obligation*. As it was instituted in Memory of *much greater Benefits* than the *Passover* commemorated, it cannot be supposed that the Observance of it would be required under the Sanction of a less severe Penalty. If a *Jew* was to be *cut off* for the Neglect of their *Memorial*, can a *Christian* expect to enjoy the Benefits of *Christ's* Death, or not to be punished in the next World, if he refuses to shew his *Gratitude* and *Obedience* to his *Saviour*, by his Attendance upon that holy Solemnity, which was appointed in Memory of it? No. Such a Soul has nothing to expect but to be *cut off* from all the Benefits of *Christ's* Passion, and doomed to *eternal* Death. This Argument is as strong as any Argument can possibly be that is drawn from *Analogy*, i. e. *Parity of Reason*.

3. But this Institution is not a *bare Memorial* of *Christ's* Death, but the *Means* of our partaking of the Benefits which he purchased for us, and on God's Part a visible Pledge to assure us thereof. I shall first collect the Sense of *our Church* concerning this Matter. The 28th *Article* says, " that the *Supper of the Lord* is not only a *Sign*  
 3 " of

“ of the *Love* that *Christians* ought to have  
 “ among themselves one to another, in Imitation  
 “ of *Christ’s* Love to us, (shewn particularly by  
 “ dying for us, and uniting us together in one  
 “ *Body*, of which he is the *Head*) but rather it  
 “ is a *Sacrament* of our Redemption by *Christ’s*  
 “ Death ; so that to such as *rightly*, and with  
 “ *Faith*, receive the same, the Bread that we  
 “ break is the *partaking* of the *Body* of *Christ* ;  
 “ and likewise the Cup of Blessing which we  
 “ bless, is the *partaking* of the *Blood* of *Christ*.”  
 After which, having declared herself against the  
*literal* Sense of the Words of the Institution, she  
 goes on in the Article to declare that the *Body*  
 and *Blood* of *Christ* are *given*, *taken*, and *eaten*  
 after a spiritual Manner ; and that the *Mean*  
 whereby the *Body* of *Christ* is received, is *Faith*.  
 Which last Words exclude wicked Persons  
 from *partaking* of the *Body* and *Blood* of *Christ*,  
 though they receive the *Elements*. In her *Catechism*,  
 having instructed her Catecumens that  
 there are two Things in each of the Sacraments,  
 that is, the *outward visible Sign*, and the *in-*  
*ward* and *spiritual Grace* and *Favour*, she  
 teaches them that the *outward* Part of the Sa-  
 crament of the Lord’s Supper, is *Bread* and  
*Wine*, but the *inward* Part, or Thing signified,  
 is the *Body* and *Blood* of *Christ*, which are *ve-*  
*rily* and *indeed* taken and received by the *Faith-*  
*ful*. In the first *Homily* concerning this *Sacra-*  
*ment*, she declares herself after the same Man-  
 ner ; “ Thus much we must be sure to hold,  
 “ that in the Supper of the Lord there is no  
 “ *vain*

“ *vain Ceremony, no bare Sign, no untrue Fi-*  
 “ *gure of any Thing absent, but the Table of*  
 “ *the Lord, the Bread and Cup of the Lord;*  
 “ *the Mercies of Christ; the Annunciation of*  
 “ *his Death; yea the Communion of the Body*  
 “ *and Blood of the Lord, in a marvellous In-*  
 “ *corporation, which, by the Operation of the*  
 “ *Holy Ghost, is, through Faith, wrought in*  
 “ *our Souls.” Thus the partaking of the out-*  
 “ *ward and visible Signs of the Body and Blood of*  
 “ *Christ, are appointed, by God, as the Means*  
 “ *(when received with Faith) of partaking of all*  
 “ *the Benefits of Christ’s Death, represented by the*  
 “ *Bread and Wine. So that nothing can be clearer*  
 “ *than that, according to the Doctrine of the*  
 “ *Church of England, no Christian can be a Par-*  
 “ *taker of the Body and Blood of Christ, that is,*  
 “ *the Benefits of his Death, without partaking of*  
 “ *those outward Signs which Christ ordained as*  
 “ *the standing Means of conveying them. She*  
 “ *asserts, likewise, in her Catechism, that, by being*  
 “ *appointed as a Means, it is made a public Pledge,*  
 “ *or Assurance, that if we rightly partake of this*  
 “ *divine Institution we shall certainly partake of*  
 “ *all those Advantages which the Body and Blood*  
 “ *of Christ purchased for us upon the Cross. This*  
 “ *is plainly implied in the Nature of the Thing.*  
 “ *Agreeably to God’s own Ordinance we publickly*  
 “ *plead the Benefits of Christ’s Passion; we hold*  
 “ *forth a Representation of his Death to God, as*  
 “ *well as to the People; thereby laying Claim to*  
 “ *the Benefits of it. And, therefore, if we refuse*  
 “ *thus to plead, or claim, the Benefits of his Pas-*  
 “ *sion,*

sion, by attending that *Representation* of it which he himself appointed for that Purpose, we, in effect, *give them up*.

I shall now shew the Sense of St. *Paul* concerning the *Nature* and *Effects* of this holy Institution, as we find it set forth in the 10th Chapter of his *first* Epistle to the *Corinthians*, and explained by the justly celebrated Mr. *Locke*. Though we have many other learned and judicious *Commentators*, I chuse the Authority of his Opinion, because he never was suspected of any *Partiality* in Favour of *divine Ordinances*.

Ver. 16. The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Christ? The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Christ?

They who drink of the Cup of Blessing which we bless in the *Lord's Supper*, do they not thereby *partake* of the *Benefits* of *Christ's Blood* shed for them upon the Cross, which they here *symbolically* drink? And they who eat of the Bread broken there, do they not *partake* in the *Sacrifice* of the Body of Christ, and profess to be Members of him?

18. Behold Israel after the Flesh, are not they who eat of the Sacrifices Partakers of the Altar?

See how it is among the *Jews*; are not they who eat of the Sacrifice *Partakers* of God's Table the Altar, have *Fellowship* with him, and *share* in the Benefits of the



the Sacrifice as if it were offered for them?

20. The Things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to Devils, and not to God: and I would not that you should have Fellowship with Devils.

The Things which the *Gentiles* sacrifice they sacrifice to *Devils*, and not to *God*; and I would not that you should have *Fellowship*, and be in *League* with *Devils*, as they who by eating of the Things offered to them, enter into *Covenant*, *Alliance*, and *Friendship* with them.

21. Ye cannot drink the Cup of the Lord, and the Cup of Devils; ye cannot be Partakers of the Lord's Table, and the Table of Devils.

You cannot eat and drink with God as *Friends* at his Table, and entertain *Familiarity* and *Friendship* with Devils, by eating with them, and partaking of the Sacrifices offered to them.

Now if Mr. *Locke* thought eating of the Sacrifices offered up to *Devils* to be a Declaration of their being in *League*, or in *Covenant* with them, he must think that *eating* the Bread and Wine at the *Lord's Table* is a *Fæderal*, or *Covenant Act* also; and, consequently, it was this great Man's Opinion, that the Sacrament of the *Lord's Supper* is more than a *bare Memorial*, or *calling Christ's Death to mind*, by the outward Signs of Bread and Wine. But *St. Luke* and *St. Paul*, when they cite the Words of the Institution, instead of saying, with *St. Matthew*

and St. *Mark*, This is *my Blood*, expressly stile the Bread and Wine the *New Testament*, or *Covenant* : So does the *Consecration Prayer* in the Communion Service. And in the Collect immediately following, the Church plainly supposes, that in this Act of Communion with *Christ*, as we do in our *Baptismal Covenant*, we *dedicate ourselves, our Souls, and Bodies to his Service*. And a very comfortable Thing it is to all serious Persons, conscious of their daily Lapses, whereby they forfeit their Title to Pardon, and all the other Benefits of the *Christian Covenant*, which God made with us at our *Baptism*, to have the Opportunity of *renewing* it, and being *restored* to God's Favour, by thus *federally* partaking of his *Body and Blood*.

The next thing to be considered is, the *Frequency* of receiving this Sacrament. In the Words of the Institution there is nothing that either *expresses*, or *implies* it. It only says, *as often*, &c. which only proves that it is not like the Sacrament of *Baptism*, but an Institution to be *repeated*. If this Point could not be cleared up any other Way, it might be done to Satisfaction by the Practice of the *Apostles* and *first Christians*, who could not be ignorant of the Intention of our Saviour. Were we in any doubt about the meaning of any old Act of Parliament, and the Intention of the Legislature in enacting it, if we had any authentic History of the Sense of the Judges, and most eminent Lawyers, and the Practice of the Nation immediately after it was enacted; I presume every reasonable Man would think

think this Evidence satisfactory. Now, we have the most authentic History of the Sense and Practice of the *Apostles* and *primitive* Christians, immediately after the Institution of the Sacrament, and they received it, at first, every Time they met together for publick Worship. Time has not *at all* altered the *Nature* of the Institution. The only Alteration is in *Christians*, who have not so much *Piety* as they then had. But there is in the *Nature*, and *Ends*, of it sufficient Proof that it ought *frequently* to be repeated.—As it is a *fæderal* Rite, whereby we *renew* our *baptismal* Covenant, which we are so frequently breaking, and *recover* the Privileges which we are so frequently *forfeiting* by these Breaches; this shews, not only the *Expediency*, but the *absolute Necessity*, of a *frequent Renewal* of our broken Covenant.—As it is, on *God's* Part, a *publick Pledge*, or *Assurance*, that if we *rightly*, and *with Faith*, partake of the *Representatives* of *Christ's* Body and *Blood*, we thereby partake of all the Benefits of his *Passion*, Can this be done *too often*? Can a disconsolate Sinner *too often* see this *Token* of his *Pardon*? Can a *weak* Creature *too often* see this *visible Assurance* of *spiritual Strength*? Can he *too often* use this *great Means* of obtaining it? For, if by receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, we *partake* of all the Benefits purchased by his *Blood*, one of which is the Assistance of his *Spirit*, this Act *must* be, in a more *particular* Manner than any other *can* be, a *Means of Grace*.—To entertain a Person at

our *Table*, and to entertain him *handsomely*, is an Act of *Familiarity* and *Friendship*. When we receive the Sacrament of CHRIST, our *dearest Friend*, our *greatest Benefactor*, entertains us at *his Table*, and entertains us in the *kindest* and *noblest* Manner that can be conceived. Lord Jesu! How can I *express*, what I cannot *conceive*! Yes, Lord, I can express this *astonishing*, and *inconceivable* Instance of thy Love in thine own Words, *He that eateth the Bread, and drinketh the Wine at my Table in Remembrance of me, eateth and drinketh my Body and Blood*: And can we *too often* do ourselves this high Honour? Can we *too often* partake of this reviving, this heavenly *Food*?

But many People will acknowledge the great Comfort and Advantages of receiving the Sacrament *worthily*, but they dread the Danger of receiving it *unworthily*. This is a Point that deserves a particular Consideration, but it is a Point that may easily be settled; so easily, that it may justly be thought strange that so many People of common Sense should mistake it. But before I enter upon this Head I must remind the Reader of one thing that I have already proved, which is this; that let the Danger be ever so great, it is impossible that it should be greater than the Danger of living in the wilful Neglect of it. Receiving *unworthily* may relate to the *Manner* of receiving, or to the *Unfitness* to receive it.

Some Expressions of *St. Paul*, unhappily inserted in one of the *Exhortations* in the *Communion*

*nion Service*, without a sufficient Explanation, has occasioned great *Errors* and *Scruples* in the Minds of many well meaning People; and, therefore, I shall cite the *Texts*, and be farther beholden to Mr. *Locke*, for his *Comment* upon them, it being impossible for me, or any Body else, to explain them more clearly. I shall first cite Part of the *Argument*, or *Contents* of this Passage, which he has prefixt to his *Comment*. “ The  
 “ celebrating the Passover amongst the *Jews*,  
 “ was plainly the eating of Meat, *distinguished*  
 “ from other *ordinary* Meals by several peculiar  
 “ Ceremonies; two of these Ceremonies were,  
 “ eating of Bread solemnly broken, and drink-  
 “ ing a Cup of Wine, called the *Cup of Bless-*  
 “ *sing*: These two our Saviour transferred into  
 “ the *Christian* Church, to be used in their As-  
 “ semblies for a Commemoration of his Death  
 “ and Sufferings. In celebrating this Institution  
 “ of our Saviour, the Judaizing Christians fol-  
 “ lowed the Jewish Custom of eating their Pass-  
 “ over; they eat the *Lord's-Supper* as a Part of  
 “ their Meat, bringing their Provisions into the  
 “ *Assembly*, where they eat divided into distinct  
 “ Companies, some feasting to Excess, while  
 “ others, ill-provided, were in Want. Their eat-  
 “ ing thus in their *publick Assembly*, and mixing  
 “ the *Lord's-Supper* with their *ordinary Meal*,  
 “ as a *Part* of it, with other Disorders and In-  
 “ decencies accompanying it, is the Matter of  
 “ this Section.”

## CHAP. xi.

Ver. 20. When ye come together into one Place, this is not to eat the Lord's-Supper.

21. For in eating every one taketh, before other, his own Supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

22. What, have ye not Houses to eat and drink in, or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have

You come together it is true, in one Place, and there you eat, but yet this makes it not to be the eating of the *Lord's-Supper*.

For in eating you eat not together, but every one taketh his own Supper, one before another. (a)

Have you not Houses to eat and drink in at home, for satisfying your Hunger and Thirst? Or have ye a Contempt for the Church of God,

(a) Ver. 21. To understand this we must observe,

1. That they had sometimes Meetings on Purpose only for eating the Lord's Supper, Ver. 33.

2. That to these Meetings they brought their own Supper, Ver. 21.

3. That tho' every one's Supper was brought into the *common Assembly*, yet they did not eat *in common*, for every one fell to his own Supper, *apart*, as soon as he and his Supper were there ready for one another, without staying for the rest of the Company, or Communication with them in eating, Ver. 21, 33.

In this St. Paul blames three Things especially;

1<sup>st</sup>, That they eat their *ordinary Food* in the *Assembly*, or *Church*.

2<sup>dly</sup>, That though they eat in the *common Meeting-place*, yet they eat, *separately*, every one his own Supper, *apart*; so that the Plenty and Excess of some shamed the Want and Poverty of others, Ver. 22, 34. Hereby also the Divisions amongst them were kept up, Ver. 18. they being as so many *separated* and *divided Societies*, not as *one* united Body of *Christians* commemorating their *common Head*, as they should have been in celebrating the *Lord's Supper*, Chap. x. xvi. xvii.

3<sup>dly</sup>, That they mixed the *Lord's Supper* with their own, eating it as a *Part* of their *ordinary Meal*, whereby they made not that *Discrimination* between it and their *common Food* as they should have done, Ver. 29.

have not? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

God, and *propbane* it by putting it to *common* Uses; and take a Pleasure in putting those out of Countenance, who have not wherewithal to feast here as you do: In this I cannot praise you.

23. For I have received of the Lord, that which I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same Night in which he was betrayed, took Bread.

For what I received, concerning this Institution, from the Lord himself, that I delivered unto you, when I was with you; and it was this, *viz.* that the Lord Jesus in the Night wherein he was betrayed, took Bread, &c.

24. And when he had given Thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat, this is my Body, which is broken for you: this do in Remembrance of me.

25. After the same Manner also he took the Cup when he had supped, saying, This Cup is the New Testament in my Blood: This do ye, as oft as ye shall drink it, in Remembrance of me.

26. For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye shew forth the Lord's Death till he come.

So that the eating of this Bread, and drinking this Wine at the Lord's Supper, is not to satisfy Hunger and Thirst,

27. Wherefore, who-  
soever shall eat this  
Bread, and drink this  
Cup of the Lord un-  
worthily, shall be guilty  
of the Body and  
Blood of the Lord.

28. But let a Man  
examine himself, and  
fo

Thirst, but to shew forth  
the Death of our Lord.

He who eats this Bread,  
and drinks this Cup of the  
Lord in an unworthy Man-  
ner, (*b*) not suitable to that  
End, shall be guilty of a  
*Misuse* of the Body and  
Blood of the Lord; that is,  
of the Elements that repre-  
sent them, and will be lia-  
ble to the Punishment due  
to such a Misuse of the sa-  
cramental Bread and Wine.  
What that Punishment was  
we see at Verse 30.

By this Institution there-  
fore let him examine (*c*)  
himself,

(*b*) Our Saviour in the Institution of the Lord's Supper, tells the Apostles that the Bread and Wine were *sacramentally* his Body and Blood, and that they were to be eaten and drank in Remembrance of him; which was, as St. Paul interprets it, Ver. 26. to shew forth his Death till his second Coming to Judgment. Whosoever therefore eat and drank them, so as not solemnly to shew forth his Death, followed not *Christ's* Institution, but used them *unworthily*. That is, not to the *End* to which they were instituted. This makes St. Paul tell them, Ver. 20. that their coming together to eat it, *viz* the *sacramental* Bread and Wine, as they did, *promiscuously* with their other Food, as a Part of their *common Meal*; and that too, not *altogether* at one Time, and in one Company, though it were in the same Place, was not the *right*, not a *worthy*, Manner of eating the Lord's Supper.

(*c*) St. Paul, as we have observed, tells the *Corinthians*, Ver. 20. that to eat it after the Manner they did, was not to eat the Lord's Supper. He tells them also, Ver. 29. that to eat and drink the Elements without a due Regard had to the Lord's Body, (for so he calls the *sacramental* Bread and Wine, as our Saviour did in the Institution) by separating the Bread and Wine, in the  
*sacramental*



so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup. himself, and according to that (d), let him eat and drink at the Lord's Supper.  
For

*sacramental Use* of them, from the *common Use* of them for Hunger and Thirst, was to eat and drink *unworthily*. To remedy their Disorders herein, he sets before them *Christ's own Institution* of this Sacrament, that in it they might see the *Manner* and *End* of its Institution, and that every one might compare his Behaviour at the Lord's Supper, in order to *judge* whether it were suitable to them. In the Account which he gives of the Institution, we may observe, that he *particularly* remarks to them, that the eating and drinking there was no Part of *common* eating and drinking for Hunger and Thirst, but was instituted in a most solemn Maner, *after* they had supped, and for *another End*, *viz.* to be eaten and drank in Remembrance of him; to represent *Christ's Body and Blood*; or, as *St. Paul* expounds it, to shew forth his Death. They might also observe another Thing in the Institution, *viz.* that this was to be done when they were all, at one Time, united together in one Company. All which put together shews, what the *Examination*, or *Judging*, here recommended, is. For, the Apostle's Design being to reform their Abuses in the Celebration of the Lord's Supper, by *that alone* we must understand his Directions about it, if we will suppose that he talk'd pertinently, to this captious and touchy People. And if his Account of the Institution were not the Rule by which they were to examine their Behaviour on this Occasion, and adjust themselves to it, to what Purpose was this Account given? The *Examination*, therefore, proposed, was no other than an Examination whether their *Manner* of eating the Lord's Supper, comported with the Institution, and with the End for which it was instituted; which farther appears to be so by the *Punishments* annexed to their Miscarriages, which were *temporal* ones, in order to prevent their being *condemned to eternal Death* in the next World. If the *Unworthiness*, here meant, were any of those Sins which are usually made the Matter of Examination, and for which Men will be punished with infinitely greater *Judgments* than God inflicted upon these disorderly *Corinthians*, it is highly reasonable to suppose, that the Apostle would not have passed over such Sins in Silence.

(d) So let him eat. That is, let him examine his Carriage by the Institution, and according to that let him eat. This Interpretation may, to an *English Reader*, seem wrong; for these Words, *Let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat*, are commonly understood in the same Sense with these, *let a Man examine, and THEN let him eat*; and, if this were the Sense of the Words, they

29. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's Body.

For he who eats and drinks after an unworthy Manner, without a due Respect had to the Lord's Body, in a discriminating (*e*) and purely sacramental Use of the Bread and Wine that represent it, draws a Punishment (*f*) upon himself by so doing.

30. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

And hence it is that many among you are weak and sick, and a good Number are gone to their Graves.

But

they signified no more but that Examination should *precede*, and Eating *follow*; which I take to be a quite different Thing from the Meaning of the Apostle here, whose Sense the whole Design of the Context shews to be this: *I here set before you the Institution of CHRIST, by THAT let a Man examine himself, AND ACCORDING TO that let him eat; let him conform the Manner of his eating to THAT.*

(*e*) Not *discriminating*, not putting a *Difference* between the sacramental Bread and Wine (which *St. Paul* with our Saviour calls *Christ's Body*) and other Bread and Wine, in the solemn and separate Use of them. The *Corinthians* eat the Lord's Supper in, and with, their ordinary Supper; whereby it came to be not sufficiently *distinguished* from common eating for *bodily Refreshment*, nor from the *Jewish paschal Supper*, and the Bread broken, and the Cup of Blessing used in that; nor did it, in this Way of eating it, in separate Companies, (as it were, in private Families) shew forth the Lord's Death, as it was intended to do, by the Concurrence and Communication of the whole Assembly of *Christians*, jointly united in the partaking of Bread and Wine in a Way *peculiar* to them, with Reference solely to Jesus Christ. This was that which *St. Paul* calls *eating unworthily*, as is evident from this Place

(*f*) *Damnation*. This is taken for *eternal Damnation*, but it appears plainly from *Ver. 30, 32*, that the *original Word* signifies Punishment of quite another Nature.

31. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

32. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the World.

But if we would discriminate (g) ourselves, that is, by our discriminating the Use of the Lord's Supper, we should not be judged; that is, punished by God.

But being punished by the Lord, we are *corrected* that we may not be punished with the unbelieving World.

Every intelligent Reader must be convinced that it is now impossible for any *Christian* Communicant to be guilty of the Crime for which the *Corinthians*, to whom *St. Paul* directed his Epistle, was punished; and that their Punishment was not *Damnation*, in the common Acceptation of the Word, but *Correction*, by inflicting *temporal* Evils, for their *Reformation*; or, at the highest, *Death*, by way of Terror to others. And therefore I cannot but wonder that the Compilers of our Liturgy, who were certainly Men of great Learning and Judgment, as well as Piety, should put a wrong Translation of those Passages, which they took from *St. Paul*, into the Exhortation, because it must needs lead unlearned People into Errors, and discourage them from communicating. This is both a natural Consequence, and a known Fact.

If

(g) The Word that we render *judge*, does never bear that Sense, but always signifies to *distinguish*; or *discriminate*; and in this Place it has the same Signification, and means the same Thing that it does Ver. 29.

If Mr. *Locke's*, or some other short Explanation were printed and dispersed in Parishes, it might do good. In the mean Time it is to be hoped, that the Clergy will not be wanting from the *Pulpit*, and in *private*, rightly to inform their Parishioners; though this cannot be so effectual as having a little printed Account, that they may read over leisurely, by themselves, and weigh it well.

Having shewn that we cannot receive the Sacrament *unworthily*, in *St. Paul's* Sense of the Word, after the Example of the *Corinthians*, let us enquire into the other Sort of Unworthiness, which consists in being *unfit* to receive, for want of the *proper Qualifications*. As I did before, in relation to the *Nature*, &c. of the Sacrament, I shall give the Sense of our Church, as we find it plainly delivered in the *Catechism*, and in the *Communion Service*. The Catechumen is asked this Question: *What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper?* The Answer is, *To examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former Sins, stedfastly purposing to lead a New Life, have a lively Faith in God's Mercy through Christ, with a thankful Remembrance of his Death, and be in Charity with all Men.* In the short Exhortation (in the *Communion Service*) immediately preceding the Confession, it says, "Ye that do truly and earnestly  
 " repent you of your Sins, and are in Love and  
 " Charity with your Neighbours, and intend to  
 " lead a new Life, following the Command-  
 " ments of God, and walking from henceforth  
 " in

“ in his holy Ways ; draw near with Faith,  
 “ and take this holy Sacrament to your Com-  
 “ fort.” Nay, in the other Exhortation, where  
 the terrifying Passages are inserted, there follows  
 immediately a sufficient Answer to them, and  
 such as would effectually make timorous People  
 easy, if their Terrors would suffer them coolly  
 to attend to it. “ Repent you truly for your  
 “ Sins past ; have a lively and stedfast Faith in  
 “ Christ our Saviour ; amend your Lives, and  
 “ be in perfect Charity with all Men ; so shall  
 “ ye be *meet* Partakers of those holy Mysteries.”  
 All these three Passages give a right Account of  
 the requisite Qualifications for a *worthy* Recep-  
 tion of the Sacrament. And now I would de-  
 sire any one to inform me what there is in these  
 Requisites that are not as necessary Qualifications  
 for our *daily Devotions* ? If we *confess* our Sins  
 without a sincere Sorrow for them, stedfastly  
 purposing to lead a new Life, it is *impudent*  
*Hypocrisy*. Unless we be in *Charity* with all Men,  
 we are not qualified to ask Forgiveness of God ;  
 or, if we have the Assurance to ask it, it will be  
 great Folly to expect it. We are commanded  
 to put up all our Petitions in the Name of *Christ* ;  
 but without stedfast Faith in his Merits, and a  
 thankful Remembrance of his Death, we have  
 no Right to make Use of his Name, or to the  
 Benefits of his Suffering for us : So that if any  
 one be not fit to receive the Sacrament, he is  
 not fit to say his *daily Prayers* ; and, if so, he is  
 not in a *State of Salvation*, whether he does, or  
 does not, come to the Sacrament. If a Person  
 wilfully

wilfully commits a Sin, unless he *repents* of it, it will *damn* him, though he *stays away* from the Sacrament. I will venture to affirm, that there is not any one *Qualification* for making us *meet* Partakers of that holy Institution, but what would have been the constant Duty of every *Christian*, if there had been no such Institution appointed. *Self-examination* is a *daily* Duty, a Duty absolutely necessary to a *Christian* Life; and therefore, *Heads* of *Self-examination* should not be printed in *Preparation* Books without a *Caveat* against *Mistakes*. I am satisfied, this has led many Persons to flatter themselves, that unless they come to the Sacrament they are not obliged to perform the irksome Task of looking into themselves; but, unless they do it *daily*, and at some solemn Times more fully, they cannot be *good Christians*. WHEN this more solemn Examination is to be made, no one can prescribe to another, because it depends upon Leisure and Opportunity. There cannot be a *more* proper Opportunity than before we receive the Sacrament; but, if we have an Opportunity to receive when we cannot do the other, the Sacrament ought not to be neglected on that Account. Indeed, those *Preparation* Books, for want of a *proper Caution*, have done great Mischief in another Respect; they have induced many well meaning People to think that unless they have Time to go through such a Course of *private* Meditations, and *Devotions*, they cannot be *qualified*. I have no Inclination to discourage the Duties of the Closet, which I have elsewhere

pressingly

pressingly recommended: They are Duties of *themselves*, without any Regard to the *Sacrament*, and absolutely necessary to a CHRISTIAN *Life*. Where People have Leisure, and Opportunity, to work up their Minds to as high a Pitch of *Piety* as possible, by Meditation and Prayer, before they go to the Altar, it is very right to do it. But, this *actual* Preparation cannot, at all Times, be of *absolute Necessity*. Where People have *not* Leisure for it an *habitual* Preparation is sufficient; and, without that *habitual* Preparation, all the *actual* Preparation in the World will signify nothing: If they be *habitually* prepared, they are *always* prepared; for the *Sacrament*, as well as for their *daily* Prayers. That this *actual* Preparation is not, at all Times, necessary is evident, to Demonstration, from the Practice of the first Christians, who received it every Time they met together for *publick* *Worship*: But I will bring the Argument home to their Conception by an Instance. Suppose a Person upon a sick Bed should send to the *Minister*, or *Curate*, to come and give him the Sacrament, and the Minister should desire to be excused, because he had not Time to *prepare* himself by a Course of *private Meditation* and *Devotion*. What would his Parishioner think? Now if an *habitual* Preparation be sufficient to qualify *him*, why not any of his *People*, upon such *sudden* Occasions? If not, the unhappy Person must die without the Comfort of the Sacrament, for, none of the Parish could be *qualified* to *communicate* with him: But, if any one, or

two of them, may be *qualified* by Virtue of an *habitual* Preparation, why not every one? None of these People refuse to join in the *daily Service* without *actual* Preparation, or *Warning*, and I dare venture to rest my own Salvation upon it, that whoever is *qualified* to say his *Prayers properly*, is qualified to receive the *Sacrament*; and, that if he be not *properly qualified* for the *latter*, he is not *properly qualified* for the *former*; and, if he be not *qualified* for *either*, we may venture to pronounce that Man, during his *Disqualification*, in a State of *Damnation*.— In Consequence of this mistaken Opinion concerning the Necessity of this *actual* Preparation, many are carried into another Absurdity. They shall be very strict in their *moral* Conduct, and very regular in their Attendance upon *publick*, and *private* Prayer, some Time before they receive the Sacrament, and as soon as that is over, grow very Remiss and Careless. Like *Absolution* among the *Papists*, they think it clears off old Scores, and gives them fresh Credit until the next Return of the Communion: But it is a *constant Uniformity* of Behaviour, an *uninterrupted Endeavour* to live a regular, good Life, and not such *Starts*, and *Fits*, that must qualify us for God's Favour, and the Sacrament. One Person has lately been in a great Hurry of *Business*; another has lately been on Parties of *Pleasure*, which disqualifies them for the Solemnity of the Sacrament. I ask, whether the Business of the former, and the Pleasure of the latter be Innocent in their Nature, and pursued in such a man-  
ner



ner as is consistent with that serious and religious Frame of Mind, which ought to be *habitual* to every *Christian*, and does not indispose him for his daily Devotions in his *Closet*. If it does not, neither does it indispose him for any *publick* Act of *Christian* Worship. A Man may engage in *too much* Business, or spend *too much* Time upon his Amusements, or indulge *too long* in them at *any one* Time; but, then, these *Indulgencies* are sinful in their Nature, and as inconsistent with their *daily Prayers*, as with the *Sacrament*. Another has been *ruffled*, and cannot *compose* himself. But he must *endeavour* to do it immediately, or how will he be able to say his Prayers at *Night*? Or, if he should die in the mean Time, what will become of him, for, he will not die in the *necessary* Disposition of a CHRISTIAN? Besides, the Sacrament will be the strongest Motive, and the greatest Help, to Forgiveness. If I have made this Matter clear (and if I have not, it is not in *my* Power to do it) it will enable any Person of an ordinary Understanding to remove all Doubts and Scruples, let them arise from what Cause they will: But, if any uncommon Case should disturb and perplex them, why do they not apply to their *Guides*, or some discreet Friend, for Satisfaction. This they are forward enough to do in their *temporal* Concerns; and, if they refuse to do it in *religious* Matters, of infinitely more Importance, it looks like a determined Resolution not to be set right, for fear Conviction should put them to the Trouble of reforming their Lives, or to the

Pain of Remorse from persisting to Act against  
*Conscience.*

There are so many *Manuals* of Devotion, that I cannot draw up any better than what every one may supply himself with. I will not take upon me to recommend any one in Preference to the rest; but, with regard to the *Sacrament*, I cannot help thinking Bishop *Gibjon's* to be the most Judicious. My Design was only to state some very material Points clearly, in which I have found, in a long Course of Experience, People greatly mistaken.

*Published by the same Author.*

I. **A** Sermon on the Nature and Duty of Benevolence.

II. On the Nature and Duty of living peaceably with all Men.

*Both sold by W. RUSSELL, at Horace's Head, without Temple-Bar.*

III. Three Dialogues on Anger, and Forgiveness.  
*Sold by W. OWEN, within Temple-Bar.*

IV. A Sermon against Popery.

*Sold by Deputy Clark, at the Royal Exchange.*

# To the CLERGY in, and about London and Westminster.

Reverend Sirs,

*BY the Generosity of a most worthy Prelate, and two Gentlemen, I was inabled to print a large Impression of the following Sermons, and to give away great Numbers of them: The rest were sold at a very low Price, in order to promote the Circulation of them; especially, in, and about, these populous Cities, the great Source of Corruption, whose poisonous Streams are carried, by Commerce, and Intercourse, through all Parts of the Kingdom. I may, now, with less Vanity, and more Decency, desire your Recommendation of them to your Parishioners. I, then, had no other Pretence for this Freedom than the vast Importance of the Subject, and the Seasonableness of the Discourses, the great Decay of Piety and Virtue arising, chiefly, from the infamous Prophanation of the Sunday among the Wealthy, the Great, and the Noble, whose Example has spread the Prophaneness through the trading, and lower People. I hope it will not be censured as a vain-glorious Self-commendation, if I tell you that they have met with an unexpected Degree of Approbation from the Learned and Unlearned; and are thought to be, in some tolerable Measure, calculated to answer the good Intention of them. The great Backwardness of Mankind to give Attention to Things of this Nature is the grand Motive, with every pious Christian, to Industry, and Zeal, in recommending them; the Practicableness*

A

bleness of doing it with some Success I can warrant by my own Experience. I have prevailed with many a one to lay out Six-pence, very usefully to himself; and with others, to contribute towards the Instruction, and Improvement, of those who could not afford to buy. What has been done, by a Person in my obscure Situation, may be done, more easily and effectually, by Persons in a more publick Station, and of a more publick Character. Being convinced that this is a most excellent Method of doing good, I have, at my own Expence, given away a great many small Tracts; but were my Example considerable enough to be proposed to the Imitation of my Brethren in the like Circumstances with myself, I would advise them to do it with more Caution than I have used; for, my Zeal has eaten up my Discretion; and prompted me to attempt to do publick Good to my private Prejudice, without a reasonable Prospect of a proper Recompence. That you may not suspect that I have any worldly View in desiring you to recommend these Discourses, it is highly fit to inform you, that I shall have no Share in the Profits of the Sale of them. As they are likely to see another Edition, I shall take it as a Favour if any one will be at the Trouble of telling me where he sees any Errors, or Defects. I am,

Reverend Sirs,

Sept. 26, 1751.  
Carey-Street, by  
Lincoln's-Inn.

with a most affectionate Esteem,  
your very humble Servant,

W. WEBSTER.



GEN. ii. 2, 3.

*And on the seventh Day God ended his Work, which he had made : and he rested on the seventh Day from all his Work which he had made.*

*And God blessed the seventh Day, and sanctified it ; because that in it he had rested from all his Work, which God created and made.*

**A**S I purpose to discourse to you concerning what we *Christians* call the *Sunday*, or *Lord's Day*, I have chosen, for my Text, those Words of *Moses*, wherein he gives an Account of the original Appointment of one Day in seven for *religious Uses* ; intending, from thence, to lead you through a short History of its *Institution*, till it terminates in the Appointment of this our *Christian Sabbath*, by the Authority of the *Apostles*, in honour of *Christ's Resurrection*. My main Design is, to instruct you in *what manner* the *Sunday* ought to be observed by us ; but, this cannot be done effectually, without giving you a right Notion of the *Nature*, and *End* of the *Institution* ; any more than you could tell how to apply any *Instrument*, properly, without knowing for what *Uses* it was intended, and what it is capable of serving. — To encourage

you to give me the more patient Attention, I promise not to amuse you with *doubtful* and *needless* Points of *Curiosity*, which have been usually introduced into this Subject; but only to lay before you such useful Matters as are plainly and expressly told Us in the *Bible*, or are obvious to *Common Sense*. — Before I enter upon the *Historical Part*, by Way of *Introduction*, I shall make two Remarks.

1. As we are manifestly intended for *Religious* Creatures, it is impossible that this Intention should be answer'd, unless Men employ *some Part* of their Time on *Religious Subjects*, and in *Religious Offices*; but, *Experience* shews, that if Mankind were left at Liberty, *when*, and *how often*, they would perform these Duties, the Duties would not be perform'd at all by the *Generality*. This, I think, may convince any impartial Person, that there is all imaginable Reason to believe that God *did* appoint an Institution for this Purpose from the *Beginning* of the World. This, I say, would appear highly probable, from the *Nature* and *Reason* of the Thing, were the Scriptures silent about it.

2. It is, likewise, equally reasonable to suppose that God should have taken some Method to preserve the *Memory* of the *Creation*, in order to preserve the Knowledge and Worship of Himself, the *Creator*. Now, what Method could so effectually have answered this Purpose, as the Appointment of one Day in seven for Men to rest from their daily Labours, that they

they might be at Leisure to worship God, and attend upon the Business of Religion, as God had rested from *his* Work of Creation? These Considerations shew the *Credibility* of the Account, which *Moses* gives us in the Words of my Text, of a *seventh Day's Rest*; and is a full Answer to the Conceit of some Learned Men, who thought that, tho' it be mentioned here *immediately after* the Account of the Creation, and closely connected with it, yet the *Sabbath* was not actually instituted till above Two Thousand Years after. It is somewhat strange, that Men of Abilities should entertain such an absurd Opinion. For, besides that it supposes a most judicious and correct Writer to write after the most unnatural and inaccurate Manner; it is *morally impossible* that the Thing should be true. If it be, then the infinitely wise God suffered the World, for so long a Time, to be without an Institution highly expedient in itself, and as well fitted to answer the Purposes intended by it from the *Beginning* of the World, as ever it would be *afterwards*.—For these Reasons *Moses* must be understood in the plain and obvious Sense of the Words, when he tells us,

“ That on the seventh Day God ended his  
“ Work *which* He had made, and rested from  
“ all his Work that He had made; that God  
“ blessed the seventh Day, and sanctified it,  
“ because that in it He had rested from all  
“ his Work *which* God created and made.”

The former Chapter tells us the *Order* and *Manner* of the Creation of the World, which was finished in *six* Days; and my Text tells us, that God, having thus finished the Heavens, and the Earth, and all the Host of them, He *blessed* the seventh Day, and *sanctified* it, *because* that in it He had *rested* from all his Work of Creation. — The Reason of his blessing and sanctifying the seventh Day we have in those Words—because that in it He had *rested from all his Work*—The *Nature* of that *Blessing*, or *Sanctity*, with which God honoured it, above the other six Days, consisted in its being thus *separated* from the rest, and *set a-part* for the *Worship of God*, and for the *Religious Improvement of Men*.—That this is the Meaning of those Words is evident from a great Variety of Places in the *Bible*, where we read, of God's *sanctifying*, that is, *setting a-part* PERSONS, and BEASTS, and PLACES, and THINGS, for *his particular Use*.—The *Prophets* and *Priests* under the Law, and the *Apostles* under the Gospel, were not *taken from among Men* that They might spend their Time in *Idleness*, but that They might be employed *for Men*, in Things *pertaining unto God*; as have been all their Successors in the *Ministry*.—*Beasts* were not *sanctified*, or *separated*, that they might not be employed, but that They might be used in *Sacrifices*; nor were *Places* and *Things* separated from *common Uses*, that they might not be used at all, but that they might be used in the Service of *Religious Worship*. In like Manner, the

*seventh*



*seventh Day* was not *blessed* that Men might not do any Thing on that Day, but that They might employ it to *Religious Purposes*. But, more of this hereafter. Let us now proceed in the *History* of the Institution.

From the *FIRST* Institution of the *Sabbath*, at the *Creation*, to the Deliverance of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*, we find no *direct* Mention of it, neither does there appear to have been any necessary Occasion for it; the taking Notice, even of its Observation by the People of God, either before, or after the Deluge, was needless after it had been so expressly enjoined in the Beginning. But, after *that* great Deliverance, we find the Sabbath mention'd, together with the *Reason* of its being mention'd, in the following Manner.

At the fourteenth Chapter of *Exodus*, Ver. 30. we read, *Thus the Lord saved Israel THAT Day*. If we turn back to the twelfth Chap. Ver. 14. we shall find that the Day here mentioned was the *last* of the Feast of *Unleavened Bread*; which Feast lasted *seven Days*; the *first* and *last* of which were kept Holy; the *former*, in Memory of the Deliverance of the *Israelites* out of *Egypt*; the *latter*, in Memory of God's overthrowing *Pharaoh* and his Host in the *Red Sea*. Bishop *Patrick*, upon the Authority of the great Mr. *Mead*, is of Opinion, that this *last* Day of the Feast of *Unleavened Bread* was the very Day which was afterwards appointed by *Moses*, for the *Jewish Sabbath*; because, when the *Decalogue* is repeated in the

fifth Chapter of *Deuteronomy*, the *Creation* is not mentioned, but the *Redemption* out of *Egypt* is made the Ground of the Designation of *that particular Day*, after the preceding six Days: Whether the Day, for the Observation of a Sabbath, were now *changed* on the Account of that Deliverance, or whether this Day happened to be the *seventh* Day that was appointed at the *Creation*, the *greatest* Man that ever lived could only *conjecture*, there being no *positive Proof*; but, if the Argument, here offered, proves any Thing, it proves, that the *first* Day of the Feast, and not the *last*, was the Day, because, as the learned Bishop himself observes, upon *this* Day the *Jews* were delivered out of *Egypt*, and were commanded to keep it Holy in *Memory* of that Deliverance.

In the sixteenth Chapter, we have an Account of God's sending the *Jews* Food from *Heaven*, of which every Man was to gather enough for his Subsistence, *daily*, for five Days; and on the sixth Day a *double* Quantity, because God would send them none on the seventh Day, That being intended for a Day of *Rest*.

At the twenty-second Verse, begins the Account of this Institution. " And it came to  
 " pass on the sixth Day They gathered twice  
 " as much Bread, two Omers for one Man:  
 " and all the Rulers of the Congregation  
 " came and told *Moses*. And He said unto  
 " them, This is That which the Lord hath  
 " said, *To-morrow* is the *Rest* of the *Holy Sab-*  
 " *bath* unto the Lord: Bake that which ye  
 " will

“ will bake To-day, and seeth that which ye  
“ will seeth; and that which remaineth over  
“ lay up for you to be kept until the Morn-  
“ ing. And they laid it up till the Morning,  
“ and it did not stink, neither was there any  
“ Worm therein. And *Moses* said, Eat That  
“ To-day; for To-day is a *Sabbath* unto the  
“ Lord: To-day ye shall not find it in the  
“ Field. Six Days ye shall gather it, but on  
“ the *seventh* Day which is the *Sabbath*, in it  
“ there shall be none.” And at the thirtieth  
Verse we read thus: “ So the People *rested* on  
“ the *seventh* Day.” From whence we may  
observe, that, tho’ *This* was a *particular* Insti-  
tution, appointed the *Jews* in Memory of their  
Deliverance out of *Egypt*, and therefore no  
Mention is made here of the *Creation* of the  
World; yet, so much of the *Original* Institu-  
tion, was preserved as to make it a *seventh* Day  
Sabbath, tho’ there were *Circumstances* added  
to it, that were adapted to *their particular*  
Condition\*. At this Time, and not before, a  
Rest from all Work seems to have been ap-  
pointed. There can be no reasonable Doubt  
but that under the *patriarchal* Dispensation, all  
*pious* Persons did perform religious Offices upon  
one Day in seven, in a manner beyond what  
was usual upon the other six Days in the

\* This Subject seems to have been embarrassed by learned Men, only for want of this plain Distinction between the *particular* Institution given to the *Jews* in Memory of their *Deliverance*, and the *general* Institution appointed for *all* Mankind at the *Creation*, and confirmed by *Moses* at the Publication of the *Law* from Mount *Sinai*.

Week ; but did not cease from *all* kind of Labour until *now*. And this being a *new* Institution (*new*, in respect of ceasing from all Work.) it is called in Scripture a *Sign* or *Token*; that is, a Mark of *Distinction*, whereby it was known to *what* God they did belong ; as the *Heathens* made it known *what* God they worshipped, by their *religious Rites*. By keeping one Day in seven *holy*, we acknowledge ourselves Servants of that God, who in *six* Days created the World, and rested from his Work on the *Seventh*. By resting from *all* Work on *That* Day, on which God delivered them from their *Egyptian* Servitude, the *Jews* acknowledged *Him* to be their *Deliverer* ; so that it was to *them*, a *double* Token, or Sign.

A very little while after this, the *Ten Commandments* were published from *Mount Sinai* ; and *then* the *Sabbath* was solemnly ratified, but in Terms *more general*, and applicable to *all* Persons. In the *former*, the *Jews* were commanded not to *bake*, or *seeth* any Thing, to dress, no Victuals on the Sabbath-day, or to go out of the City where they inhabited. The *latter* being intended for *perpetual* Obligation, to out-live the *Mosaick* Institutions, and to bind *all Mankind* to the End of the World, there is no Mention made of the *particular Prohibitions* given in the *former*. Besides, if it had not been the Intention of God to make a *Distinction* between the Sabbath which was *purely Jewish*, and a Sabbath which was to be *more lasting*, and of *greater Extent*, there seems to have

have been no Occasion at all for the *former Institution*, when the *latter* was to succeed it so soon after.—That the Sabbath, appointed from *Mount Sinai*, was intended to be of *perpetual* and *universal* Obligation is evident, from its being join'd, and written upon the same Tables, with the other Nine Commandments which are allowed to be so.—And what still farther confirms it is, the *Reason* given for the Institution, which equally concerns all Persons, in all Places, and in every Age of the World.—Thus we find it at the xxth ch. of *Exod.* ver. 8. “Remember the Sabbath to keep it Holy. “Six Days shalt thou labour, and do all thy “Work. But the seventh Day is the *Sabbath* “of the Lord thy God, &c. For in six Days “the Lord made Heaven and Earth, &c. “*wherefore* the Lord blessed the Sabbath-Day “and hallowed it.” Now, does not this Reason for keeping the Sabbath concern *all the World*, as much as the *Jews*? All the World, therefore, are equally obliged to observe it.

Indeed, at the fifth Chapter of *Deuteronomy*, Ver. 15. *Moses* tells the *Jews*, “That they had “been *Servants* in the Land of *Egypt*, and “that the Lord brought them from thence; “and that, *therefore* the Lord commanded “them to keep the *Sabbath-Day*.” But, this proves nothing more than that the *Jews* were under a *double* Obligation to keep the Sabbath; as *Men*, in Memory of the *Creation*; as *Jews*, in Memory of their *Redemption* from  
*Bondage*;

Bondage ; even as *we* are under a double Obligation, as *Men*, and as CHRISTIANS.

But, if we proceed, we shall meet with many Occasions of *repeating* the *original* and *general* Institution of the Sabbath, without any Mention of any *particular* Circumstances respecting the *Jews*.

At the xxiiiid of *Exod.* we find it repeated, upon the Appointment of a *sabbatical Year* ; which sabbatical Year, as well as the *sabbatical Day*, was called a *Sign*, or *Token*.—As God, by an *Angel*, delivered them from the *Egyptians* ; and by *Moses's* Wand drowned the *Egyptians* in the *Red Sea*, when They were in Pursuit of the Fugitives ; so, by *Joshua*, he subdued the *Canaanites*, and put the *Israelites* in Possession of their Land ; in Memory of which, God ordered that as soon as they came there, and had Rest in their new Possessions (reckoning from their peaceable Settlement) they should observe the seventh Year, and every seventh Year for ever, as a Year of Rest. The Law stood thus, Chap. xxiii. ver. 10, 11. “ Six Years shalt thou sow thy Land, and gather in the Fruits thereof : but the seventh Year thou shalt let it *rest*, and lie *still*.”—With some Variation in the Words it is more largely set forth at the xxvth Chap. of *Leviticus*, v. 2, 3, 4. “ Speak unto the Children of *Israel*, and say unto them, When ye come into the Land which I give you, then shall the Land keep a *Sabbath* unto the Lord.—“ Six Years thou shalt sow thy Field, and  
“ prune

“ prune thy Vineyard, and gather in the Fruit  
“ thereof. But in the *seventh* Year shall be a  
“ *Sabbath of Rest* unto the Land, a Sabbath  
“ for the Lord; thou shalt neither sow thy  
“ Field, nor prune thy Vineyard.”—This Rest  
*of the Land* was a Sabbath *for the Lord*—that  
is, an Acknowledgment of his being the *Pro-*  
*prietor*, in Right of his being the *Conqueror* of  
the Land; for, as the Psalmist says, It was not  
*their own Sword*, neither was it *their own Arm*,  
that got them the Victory over the *Canaanites*,  
but it was the omnipotent Hand of *God*. Ac-  
cordingly, God directed to what *Uses* the Pro-  
ducts of this Year should be applied; not to  
the *particular Use* of the *Owners* of the Land,  
but to *common Uses*; for *all* the People, not  
excepting the *Servants*, or, even, the *Beasts*;  
for *all in common*, as he fed them with Manna  
in the Wilderness.—But, you will ask, per-  
haps, How there could be proper and suffici-  
ent Food for all the People, and for all the  
Beasts, when neither the Land was sowed,  
nor the Trees prun'd? The 5th Verse tells  
us how. The Fruits of the Earth, That  
Year, grew *of themselves*, without any Cul-  
tivation; as *Commentators* suppose, either from  
the Seed which casually fell the Year be-  
fore, or from the old Root which sprouted  
out again. But to my Apprehension, this  
is a very unsatisfactory Account, as it is  
contrary to all Experience of the ordinary  
Course of Things. Is it not more rational to  
suppose that, as God forbid them the Use of  
those

those Means which are; *ordinarily*, necessary to make the Fields and the Trees produce their Fruits, if they trusted in his Providence, he would *blefs* That Year; which was sanctified to his Honour, with an *extraordinary* Fertility. As the Observance of this *sabbatical Year* of Rest to the Land was a *Sign*, or *Token*; so; likewise, was it a *Covenant*; whereby they might be assured of his miraculous Blessing; if, in Obedience to his Command; they did not plow, or sow, or prune.

As I had occasion to mention this *sabbatical Year*, I was willing to give you an Account of it; but, the Reason of my mentioning of it was, its carrying on the Thread of the Scripture History of the *Sabbath*.—Lest the People should imagine that this being a Year of Rest from all the Labour of *Cultivation*, they were; during that Time, exempted from the Observation of the *seventh Day*, and might do any Work on *That Day* which they were allowed to do on any other Day of the Week; for this Reason, I say, immediately after the Appointment of the *sabbatical Year*, a Repetition of the *sabbatical Day* is subjoined, Ver. 12: “Six Days thou shalt do thy Work, and on “the *seventh Day* thou shalt rest, that thine “Ox and thine Ass may rest, &c.”

We find the same Caution used on another Occasion, and That was, the Building of the *Tabernacle*. When God had told *Moses* that he had appointed proper Persons for the Work, and had given them particular Instructions how to



to make it, then the Lord spake unto him the following most solemn Words, which command your most awful Attention.

“ Speak thou also unto the Children of  
“ *Israel* saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall  
“ keep: for it is a *Sign* between *me* and *you*,  
“ throughout your Generations; that ye may  
“ know that I am the Lord, that doth sanctify  
“ you. Ye shall keep the *Sabbath*, therefore;  
“ for it is *holy* unto you.—Every one that *de-*  
“ *fileth* it shall surely be put to *Death*: for, who-  
“ soever doth any Work therein, *That Soul*  
“ shall be cut off from among his People.—Six  
“ Days may Work be done, but in the *se-*  
“ *venth* is the *Sabbath* of *Rest*, holy to the  
“ Lord: whosoever doeth any Work in the  
“ Sabbath-day, he shall surely be put to *Death*.—  
“ Wherefore the Children of *Israel* shall keep  
“ the *Sabbath*, to observe the *Sabbath* through-  
“ out their Generations, for a *perpetual Cove-*  
“ *nant*.—It is a *Sign* between *me* and the  
“ *Children* of *Israel* for ever.—For in *six* Days  
“ (mind the *Reason* which God gives for this  
“ Observation) the Lord made Heaven and  
“ Earth, and on the *seventh* Day he *rested*.”

Chap. xxxi. ver. 13, 17.—And in the xxxvth  
Chap. This Command is repeated again, and  
some particular Works are specified. Now,  
the *Reason* of so solemn a Charge on this Oc-  
casion is very plain.—As the *Tabernacle* was  
for *holy* Uses, the People might naturally have  
thought that any Work on That Day was law-  
ful,

ful, if it were done in *God's immediate Service*. But, God lets them know; that *Obedience* is better than *Sacrifice*; and would not permit them so much as to *light a Fire* on That Day, for the Use of the *Building*.—So great a *Stress* does *God* lay upon the Observance of *positive* Institutions, though *Man* is apt to make such *Trifles* of them.

At the xxiiiid of *Lev.* their several *Feasts* are enumerated; and, the *Sabbath* being a *Festival*, for fear the People should think themselves at Liberty to do such Works on the *Sabbath-Day*, as were allowable on some other *Festivals*, here is a *Caveat* entered against doing any Work on That Day.

Thus I have given you a short, but full, Scripture History of the *Sabbath*, as it is contained in the Books of *Moses*.—In which Account you have seen that it was *first* instituted immediately after the *Creation*, in Memory of it; that it was, afterwards, upon the Delivery of the *Jews* from *Egypt*, appointed That People with *additional* Circumstances *relative* to their *particular* Condition; that, at the solemn Publication of the Ten Commandments from Mount *Sinai*, the *general* Institution was confirm'd; that, upon several Occasions, this Command was repeated; at the Appointment of the sabbatical Year, the Building of the *Tabernacle*, and the Enumeration of their *Feasts*.—And from this History you may observe two Things well worth Notice.

1<sup>st</sup>, The frequent *Repetitions* of this Command. And,  
2<sup>dly</sup>, The *Sanction* of it.

Besides the *preceding* Repetitions, both the *Command* and the *Sanction* are several times repeated, in the Compass of *five* Verses, in That Quotation which I made from the xxxi<sup>st</sup> of *Exod.*—Now God would not have guarded This Institution with such *extraordinary* Care, if the Observance of it had not been of the utmost Importance, and highly acceptable to Him; nor have annexed so severe a *Penalty* to the Breach of it, had it not been highly displeasing to Him.—*He shall surely be put to death.—That Soul shall be cut off from among his People.*—Whosoever was guilty of a *publick* Violation of it, was to be stoned to death.—If he did it so *secretly* that he could not be detected by sufficient Evidence, it was the generally received Opinion of the *Jews*, that God took the Matter into his own Hand, and inflicted some heavy Judgement upon him, in the Course of His Providence.—And pray observe, that this severe Sanction was not annexed to the *particular* Institution, given to the *Jews*, in Memory of their Deliverance from their Servitude in *Egypt*, but to the *general* Institution, appointed at the *Creation*, confirmed from *Mount Sinai*, often repeated afterwards, and in *Terms*, and for a *Reason*, respecting the *whole World*.

We are now come to give an Account of our *Christian Sabbath*, when the Day was

B

changed

changed from the *seventh* to the *first* Day of the Week. This is a Subject that has employed the Pens of the Learned, and occasioned many Books to be written upon it: but I never considered any *disputed* Subject that seems to lie in a less Compass, or to be more obvious to *common Sense*, without the Assistance of *Learning*.

From the History, which I have given you out of the Old Testament, it appears very plainly, that a *Seventh-day Sabbath* was appointed for a *Reason*, the Force of which must reach *backwards* to the *Beginning*, and *forwards* to the *End* of the World. I shall not repeat what I have said, but the Substance of it is this: “ In *Six Days* God created the World; on the *seventh* Day God had ended his Work; and for *This Reason* He blessed the *seventh* Day, and made it *holy*. This is the Tenour of the *original* Institution at the *Creation*, of the *Republication* of it from *Mount Sinai*, and of the several *Repetitions* of it afterwards.” This Institution being thus established upon a *Reason* that must hold *universally*, it clearly follows that we *Christians* are obliged to observe a *Seventh-day Sabbath*, in Memory of the *Creation*. The only Question is, whether we be obliged to observe the *same* Day of the Week which the *Jews* observed. If we be, is it because God commanded *them* to keep that Day? If so, then you make it a mere *Jewish* Institution; and, consequently, it was nailed to  
the

the Cross of Christ, and died with Him, as all the other *Mosaical Ordinances* did.—Is it because the *Jewish Sabbath* was upon the very Day of the Week which was appointed at the *Creation*? This is more than any Man, or all the Men in the World can prove. But to cut this Argument short, it has been demonstrated \* that the *same Day* would not be the *seventh Day* from the *Creation* in all Parts of the World; and that in *some Parts* the *Sabbath* would fall eighteen Hours later than in *Palestine*. If there be therefore such a thing as a *Demonstration*, this Fact *demonstrates* that it never could be the Intention of God, that the Observance of the *seventh Day* from the *Creation* should be of *perpetual* and *universal* Obligation; though he most certainly intended that the Observance of *one Day* in *seven* should be so.—If therefore, upon the *Abolition* of the *Jewish Law*, *Christians* had no Directions from the *New Testament*, it must have lain in the Breast of *human Authority* to determine it. But then, as the *Jews* had something *particular* appointed them, in honour of their miraculous Deliverance from *Egypt*; so *Christian Powers*, if left to themselves, would naturally have been led to something, in the Appointment of a *Christian Sabbath*, that might preserve the Memory of our Deliverance from a much greater Bondage by Christ.

Having thus prepared the Way, let us see what Light the *New Testament* affords us.

\* *Waggenfeil* against *Lipman's Carmen Memoriale*, p. 51.

It is objected, that our Saviour did not, Himself, appoint the *first* Day of the Week for the *Sabbath*. But, how do these Objectors know That? If He did not Himself observe it, it does not, however, follow from thence, that He did not instruct the *Apostles* privately what They should do after his Death.

But They may reply, that, tho' He could not Himself observe this Rite in his Life-time; He might have done it after his *Resurrection*.—To this Objection it is a sufficient Answer to say, that He knew best what was proper to be done. But, tho' He did not observe it Himself, yet if he had not done it before, He might, as far as They knew, *then* order it to be done; and there is abundant Reason to think that he *did*. He was Forty Days upon Earth with them, instructing them concerning the future Settlement of his Church; and it is not at all probable, that in his Instructions He should omit so capital a Thing as the Appointment of a *Christian Sabbath*, in the Room of the *Jewish*; and such a one, as might be a *Sign* or *Token*, between God and Us *Christians*, in the same manner as the *Jewish Sabbath* was a *Sign*, or *Token*, between God and That People.

Some *Christian* Writers in the Warmth of their Zeal, have maintained that our Saviour, after his *Resurrection*, did, in *effect*, tho' not *directly*, appoint the *first* Day of the Week for *our Sabbath*, because He appeared to his Disciples on that Day, when they were assembled

bled together, for *Christian* Worship.—I must ask their Pardon, if I do not see how these weekly Meetings for publick Worship on that Day should derive their Authority, or how that Day could receive its Sanction, from *Christ's* Appearances among them, when these Meetings on that Day were *prior* to his having appeared there; for we read, that they were assembled together before He came.—But, their having made Choice of this Day before He *did* come, this shews plainly that *Christ* had given them Instructions about it before.—This seems to me highly probable, tho' I lay no Strefs upon it: But his first Appearance to them being on the first Day of the Week, when they were assembled for *Christian* Worship, seems to be the strongest Testimony of his Approbation of the Institution; as his Approbation gave a strong Sanction to it. It is sufficient for the Purposes of my Point, that the *Apostles*, who must know their Master's Will, and had full Power to determine all Points which He himself had not determined, did observe this Day, as the *Christian Sabbath*; and that all *Christian* People, in all Parts of the World, from the *Apostles* Days have followed their Example.—It is no Answer to this Argument to say, that in the Acts of the *Apostles* we meet with no *express Injunction*; for, their *Practice* had the Force of a *Law*, because they had a *Commission* from *Christ*, and by Inspiration from the Holy Ghost were *infallibly* directed in the Execution of it; and

they proved their divine Commission and Inspiration by *Miracles*. Thus *commissioned*, thus *inspired*, they settled this Rite by their constant Practice; it was then understood to be a *Christian Ordinance*; and what would any Man have more? As *Primate Bramhall* justly observes, “He that will not be satisfied with the “perpetual Tradition of the Universal Church, “*i. e.* the whole World of Believers, including the *Apostles themselves*, is utterly incapable of any real Satisfaction.”—But, whatever Foundation the *Sunday* may be supposed to stand upon; whether an immediate Appointment by *Christ* Himself, whether an *Apostolical* Institution under his Direction, whether an *Ecclesiastical*, or *Civil* Establishment; a *Seventh-day Sabbath* stands, and *ever must* stand, irreverfible, immoveable, upon the solid Rock of an immediate Appointment by *God* Himself, as the *Creator* of the World. If this be admitted (and I may venture to challenge the whole World to confute it) there can be no Room for a rational Debate, whether the *first* or the *last* Day of the Week, be the fittest for a *Christian Sabbath*. —The Death of *Christ* delivered us from the Dominion of Sin, and the Power of the Grave; upon the *first* Day of the Week He rose from the Dead, publickly to testify that God had accepted his Death for the Purposes of our Redemption. Highly expedient, therefore, is it, that the Memory of this glorious Event should be perpetuated in the Hearts of all



all those who expect a Share in the Benefits of it: and how could that be done more effectually, than by the Appointment of the *Sabbath* upon *that* Day, which assured to the World the *Efficacy* of the Atonement which He made for Us?

We are next to consider how this sacred Institution ought to be observed.

Under this Head I shall consider, FIRST, what we ought *not* to do upon the *Sunday*—SECONDLY, what the Duty of the Day *requires* from us, in order to answer the Purposes of the Institution.

FIRST, Let us consider what we ought *not* to do upon the *Sunday*. And these *Prohibitions* I shall consider under *Three* different Heads.

I. As they are plainly *implied*, tho' not *expressed*, in the *original* Institution of a *Sabbath* at the *Creation*.

II. As they are *expressly* contained in the *Fourth* Commandment, published by *Moses* from *Mount Sinai*.

III. As They are specified in an *Act of Parliament*.

You see, I omit those Prohibitions, which are mentioned in the Institution that was given to the *Jews*, immediately after their Deliverance from *Egypt*, because, *That* was *relative* to their *Deliverance*, and *peculiar* to *Them*.

FIRST then let us consider what *Prohibitions* are *plainly implied*, tho' not *expressed*, in the *original* Institution at the *Creation*.—God instituted a *Sabbath*, i. e. a Day of *Rest*; in

*Memory*, and in *Imitation*, of his having been employed *six Days*, and resting from the Work of *Creating* on the *seventh*. But how is the Design of this Institution answered, if on the *seventh Day* Men follow the common Business, and ordinary Affairs of Life? This Day is *sanctified, distinguished* from the other six Days, and *set apart* for *pious and religious Uses*; but, if we spend this Day in the Pursuit of *secular Affairs*, or our *usual Recreations*, it is not employed for the Purposes intended by God. Now, does this Institution concern *all Mankind*, or only *Masters and Mistresses*? Surely *all Mankind*. Therefore it was intended for a Day of Rest, and Religious Uses, for *Servants*, also: The Consequence of which Rest to *Men*, must be Rest to *Beasts* too.

SECONDLY, I shall consider these Prohibitions as they are contained in the Fourth Commandment. It is agreed by all Writers, that there were some Prohibitions that concerned the *Jews ONLY*; such as dressing no Meat; making no Fires for any other Uses than warming themselves in cold Weather; not going out of their Places, *i. e.* not farther than the Suburbs of the City where they dwelt, &c. Those *we* have nothing to do with. As to the Fourth Commandment, delivered from the *Mount*, though it was given to the *Jews*, it was not intended for a Law *peculiar* to that People; because, as I observed to you before, the *Reason* assigned for it, respects *all Mankind equally*, as the other Nine Com-

Commandments do. The Obligation must be as *extensive* as the *Reason* upon which the Law is grounded. The *Reason* still subsists in its full Force; consequently the *Obligation* must continue: The *Reason* is *unlimited*; consequently the *Obligation* must be universal, wherever the Law is sufficiently promulged. In this Case a *formal Confirmation* of it was not necessary, in order to make it obligatory upon Us *Christians*; it is enough that our Saviour did not *formally repeal* it. It is strange that it ever should be made a Question, whether the Fourth Commandment, any more than the other Nine, be still in Force. But, were it a Law *purely Mosaical*, and void, every Part of it is *virtually contain'd* in the *original Institution*, appointed at the *Creation*, as I observ'd to you. But, let us see how the *prohibiting* Part of the Law stands.—“ In it, (*i. e.* “ on the *seventh* Day) Thou shalt do no Manner of Work, Thou, and thy Son, and thy Daughter, thy Man-servant, and thy Maid-servant, thy Cattle, and the Stranger that is within thy Gates.” Here no *particular* Works are *specified*, as there were in the Institution *before* the giving of the Ten Commandments from the *Mount*; but only a *general* Prohibition. Some Sorts of Works were allowed even under the *Rigour* of the *Jewish* Dispensation; according to our blessed Saviour's Interpretation: Some Exceptions, therefore, must be admitted here; and the *Nature* and *End* of the Law must be our Guide in deter-

determining the necessary *Limitations*. The general Intent of the Institution seems to be satisfied, if Men abstain from following their *ordinary Businesses, Trades, Professions, and Diversions*. But thus far, I think, the Prohibitions contained in the Fourth Commandment, are binding upon *Christians*, as well as *Jews*, by Virtue of that Commandment.

But there is an *additional* Obligation from *human Authority*. For,

THIRDLY, The *Legislature* has very wisely interposed, by *Civil Sanctions* to secure Obedience to the Law of God. The Law of the Land forbids all *Trade, Commerce, or Business* of any kind, unless where it is a plain Act of *Mercy*; all *unnecessary* frequenting of *publick Houses* \*; all *unnecessary Travelling*. It forbids all Sorts of Sports and Games, whether publick or private. And highly proper these last-mentioned Prohibitions are: For, *Amusements* are as inconsistent with the *Nature and End* of the Sabbath, as any kind of *Business*. Such was the *Piety and Wisdom* of our *Forefathers*. I am sorry that I cannot do Justice to my Subject, without giving Uneasiness to myself, and, probably, Offence to others. It is with Reluctance, that I am obliged to mention how these wise and pious Laws are not only *neglected*, but *insulted*: not only by the *vulgar and illiterate* Part of the People, but by the

\* Every *Ale-House* is forbid, under a Penalty to suffer any Body to sit down to *Tipple*, (as the Act expresses it) in his House.

*Rich and Great*, by the *Makers and Guardians* of the *Laws*. They are very much injured, if *Gaming* in their own Houses be not a common Practice among many of them; but I am sure, I do them no Injury, if I charge them with *Travelling* openly on the *Sunday*, and in Time of *Divine Service*. After these influential Examples, can it be any Wonder, that *Gaming* should be so frequent at *Taverns* in the *polite* Parts of *Westminster* \*? That the Roads about *that great City* and the *CAPITAL*, should be *crouded* with *Carriages* and *Horses*? That even *Stage-Coaches* should be permitted to go and come to and from the *Neighbouring Villages*? That *Taverns* and *Ale-houses* in those Places should be full all Day long? That *Waggons* should be seen in *remoter* Parts of the Kingdom? When the *vital* Parts are decayed, no wonder if there should be Corruption and Distempers in the *inferior* Parts of the Body.

It is my Desire to treat all Mankind with decent Respect; but if I had the Honour of addressing myself to them, I would coolly and candidly expostulate with such of the *Nobility* and *Gentry*, as are guilty of these open Violations of the *Laws* of their Country. Setting aside the *Obligation* arising from the plain Law of *God* in this Case, if there be such a Thing as *moral Obligation*, we are *morally obliged* to obey all *human* *Laws* enacted by *sufficient* Authority; and these *Prohibitions* have the Sanc-

\* A Friend of mine had it from a *Waiter* in one of them, that they sometimes used 30 Packs of Cards in a Day.

tion of *all* the Authority that is vested in the *whole Constitution*; and *no* Law can have *more*. If therefore the Members of the Society will take the Liberty, for their own private *Conveniency*, or *Pleasure*, to violate the *publick* Law, there is an End of *Government* and of *Order*; of all *Decency* and *Decorum*, as well as of *Religion*. If *one* Man may take his *Pleasure*, or a *Journey*, upon the *Sunday*, because he cannot do it so *conveniently* on any other Day of the Week; *every* Man must have the *same* Liberty, and *every* Man must be the Judge of his *own* *Conveniency*: so that this *discretionary* Power, in *private* Persons, of *dispensing* with the Law, does in Effect *vacate* the Law, and render it of no Use——But the Law knows nothing of these *private* *Conveniencies*, but requires *Obedience*. In Time of *Harvest*, when the Weather has been unfavourable, and the *Corn*, or *Hay*, is in Danger of being spoiled, it would be *extremely convenient* for the *Farmers*, if they might take the Opportunity of a fine Day to break the *Sabbath*: But, *irreligious* as the *present* Age is, the very *worst* of them do not presume upon such a Liberty; tho' there would be much more to be said in Mitigation of *their* Crime, than can be pleaded in Cases of *lesser* *Inconveniencies*, such as most People's are. Nothing but *necessary* Works may be done on this Day: But *Conveniencies* are not *Necessaries*. What are *Necessaries* our Saviour has determined, *viz*, *pulling an Ox out of a Ditch*, or *curing a Man that is sick*. By *Pa-*  
*riety*

ity of Reason we may save a Person from Ruin, or any very great Mischief, where the Case requires *immediate* Assistance, as in those above-mentioned. I say, *immediate* Assistance; for, let the Service be ever so great that we can do him, unless it be of such a Nature that it cannot wait till next Day, without manifest Hazard of losing the Opportunity of doing it, no *Necessity*, consequently no *Mercy*, can be pleaded. But, in those *Extremities* the Law of the *Land*, as well as the Law of *God*, will bear a Man out in *doing good* on the *Sabbath-Day*. But, with Reverence to the *Legislature* I speak it, I think, the Law should leave a Man, as little as possible, to his own *Judgment* of the *Necessity* of the Case. In *many* Cases it *must* be done; in *others*, it needs not. I will instance in *Travelling* on the *Sunday*. There may be very good Reasons, Reasons of *Necessity*, for doing it; but, in *most* of these Cases, it could be no Prejudice, if the Law required the Person to carry a *Certificate*, under the Hands of the *Minister* and *Church-wardens* of his Parish, of the *Reality* of it; or some such Caution might be used. At *London*, *Watermen*, as I have been informed, are not at Liberty to carry a *Fare* without a *Permit*; unless it be a *Clergy-man*, *Physician*, *Surgeon*, *Apothecary*, or *Midwife*. And, why cannot this Caution be used on *Land*, as well as upon the *Water*? For want of it, we see the infinite bad Consequences arising from a *discretionary* Liberty, Our Roads are filled; Persons in  
*publick*

*publick* and *private* Houses hindered from doing their Duty, by wicked Families who have no Religion, and by idle People who never think. I am willing to believe, nay I know, that Numbers of those who offend in this way, retain a serious Sense of Duty, and transgress through Ignorance. These I would intreat to consider the Point, with the Attention that is due to its great Importance; and they will easily convince themselves, that *Disobedience to Government* is no light Offence, were the *Subject Matter* of the Law of ever so trifling a Nature. Every wilful Transgression of the Laws of our Country adds to the Number of our Sins, and the Load of our Guilt; and, if persisted in, will increase our Punishment in the next World.

While I am upon the Head of *Prohibitions*, I must take notice of one Way of *profaning* the *Sabbath*, and offending against *Civil Authority*, which very few, I doubt, have any Notion of; I mean, *riding out*, either on *Horseback*, or in a *Coach*, *after the Duty of the Day is over* (as they weakly imagine) whether it be to take the Air, or to make a Visit. You may be surpris'd at my Doctrine, but it is certainly true, because this is *travelling* and *employing Servants* and *Cattle unnecessarily*, as much as taking a *Journey* is; and therefore is as much *forbidden*, by the *Intention* of the original Institution, by the *express Letter* of the 4th Commandment, and by the Laws of the Land. For the same Reason, all *unnecessary Entertainments*



tainments on the Sunday, are, *virtually*, prohibited; because, instead of *contriving* (as every Master of a Family ought to do) how to give his *Servants* as much *Rest*, as possible, from their *ordinary* Labour, and as much *Leisure*, as possible, for the Business of *Religion*, this is loading them with *extraordinary* Labour, and hindering them from doing their Duty to God.

Having shewn what we ought *not* to do upon the *Sunday*, we are next to examine what we *ought* to do. For, tho' it is a Day of *Rest* from the ordinary Concerns of *this* Life, it is not intended for a Day of *Idleness*, but of BUSINESS. Let us therefore, consider what is the *proper* Business of this Day, At the xxxi<sup>st</sup> Chap. of *Exod.* *Moses* says, that the *Sabbath* was *holy* unto the *Lord*, and *holy* unto the People. Before the *Deliverance* of the *Jews* from *Egypt*, the *Sabbath* was *sanctified* to the *Knowledge* and *Worship* of the *true* God, as the *Creator* of the World. To the *Jews* it was *farther* sanctified, to the *Knowledge* and *Worship* of Him, as their *Deliverer* from their *Egyptian* Bondage, and their *Law-giver*; as they were a *peculiar* People, distinguished from the rest of the World by a *select* Body of Laws. To us CHRISTIANS the *Sunday* is *sanctified*, i. e. *set apart*, for the *Knowledge* and *Worship* of God, as our *Creator*; and of *Jesus Christ*, as our *Redeemer* and *Law-giver*; and to our *Improvement* in the *Knowledge* of the *Doctrines* and *Duties* of  
Christ

*Christianity.* From this short Account we may easily shew how *Christians* ought to spend the *Sunday*.

As the *Jews* were obliged to attend the *Jewish Worship*, at such Times as were appointed by their *Law*, and to improve themselves in the *Knowledge* of the *Law*, and of other *religious Truths*; so we *CHRISTIANS* are required to attend *christian Assemblies*, at the Times appointed by *publick Authority*; and, at *Home*, to improve ourselves and Families in *christian Knowledge*. To these *religious Uses* the *Sunday* is *sanctified*, or set apart; in the same Manner, as *Places* and *Things* are *consecrated*, or set apart, for religious Uses. And, as they are *profaned* whenever they are applied to *common Uses*; so the *Sunday* is *profaned*, whenever it is spent in Attendance upon the *ordinary Affairs* and *Amusements* of Life.

How often *Christians* ought to go to Church on *Sundays*, the *New Testament* has not specified, any more than how often in a Day we should pray in *private*, or how much of our Income we should give in *Charity*: but *publick Authority* has determined, that every Man who has an Opportunity, and is not *necessarily* hindered, should go to Church *Morning*, and *Afternoon*. You may say, *where* does the Law of the Land *expressly* require this? To which I very readily answer, *No where*; and, yet, I insist upon it that the Law *does*, nevertheless, *require* it. It is the *Will*, or *Intention*, and not the

the *Letter* only, or the *Penalty* of the Law, that binds the *Conscience*. Now, that it is the *Intention* of the Law that every Man, who has an *Opportunity*, and is not *necessarily* hindered, should go *twice* a Day is undeniably evident from its providing an *Evening*, as well as a *Morning Service*; which it would *not* have done, if it had not *meant* that the People should attend it. If there were no *other* Obligations, this would be a sufficient one upon all the Members of the *established Church*, by virtue of That Obedience which is due to Government. To this Argument it may be objected, that it proves too much, because it proves, *equally*, that there being a *Morning* and *Evening* Service appointed for *every* Day, *all* People are required to attend *twice* every Day. By no Means. This Appointment only shews, that such as have an Opportunity, consistently with the *necessary* *Businesses*, and *ordinary* Affairs of Life, should attend: But all *worldly* *Business* and *Recreations* on the *Sunday* being *prohibited*, the same Excuses will not justify *Non-attendance* on *That* Day which will justify our not attending the *daily* Service, though we are expected to be as constant as *conveniently* we can.—But, If the *Legislature* had been *neuter* in this Case, who, that *calls* himself a *Christian*, can think that *twice* a Day is *too often* to go to Church on *Sundays*? What *good* Christian would not *readily* and *joyfully* embrace the Opportunity? *You*, my Brethren, are so happy as to *have* the Opportunity; I

wish I could see by your Behaviour, that you are duly sensible of your Happiness. In order to induce you to be more constant, I shall briefly remind you of the *Object*, and the *Subject*, of your publick Devotions; and a very little Reflection upon them will make you stand amazed at your own Conduct; that, instead of *neglecting* this honourable, this advantageous, this comfortable, and delightful Duty, upon such *little* Pretences, you are not tempted rather to be *superstitiously* pious, at the Expence of *Mercy* to others, and a proper Regard to your own Health, and Safety. It is impossible for the most elevated Genius to do Justice to the infinite Perfections, and peerless Majesty, of that God who is the *Object* of these our Devotions. He is *glorious, in Holiness, fearful in Praises, doing Wonders*. His Goodness has *induced* Him, his Power and Wisdom have *enabled* Him, to *create* and *govern* more Worlds than our Imaginations can reach to the Conception of. This is so *grand*, so *awful* an Idea, that my Flesh trembleth, my Blood runs cold in my Veins, my Mind is overwhelm'd with Terror, while I think of it. And, yet, *this* is That——It is impossible for me to express the Fulness of my Thoughts.—I can only say, *this* is That *inconceivably great* and *good* Being, whom we come hither to worship. To have the Liberty of a free Address, nay, to be *invited* to come *boldly* to his Throne, and pour out our Hearts before Him, is such an *Honour* as, one would think, should excite

excite Ambition in the *Meanest*, and *more* than satisfy the Ambition of the *most aspiring* Spirit. — Consider farther, what it is that you approach Him for. We are daily, and hourly, offending this great and good God; and the first Part of our Business here is, to *unite* in a joint Confession of our manifold Sins and Wickednesses, and an humble Supplication for Mercy. — If we have a due Sense of our Sins, and of the fatal Consequences of them, shall we not, with the utmost Anxiety and Impatience, desire the Opportunity of *joining* with our Fellow-Sinners in the *House*, and upon the *Day*, dedicated by Himself, to his Honour; in Hopes, that the *Sacredness* of the *Day*, and of the *Place*, and the Force of our *united* Humiliations, might be, as they certainly are, more powerful with God than any *private* Acknowledgements in our *Closets*? — The next Part of our Devotions consists in *Praises* and *Thanksgivings*, in publicly celebrating the adorable Perfections, and wonderful Works of God, especially that stupendous Act of *Mercy*, our *Redemption* by *Christ Jesus*. Praise, to a *generous* Mind, is a most *joyful* Act; and, whenever there is *Gratitude*, it is a *pleasant thing to be Thankful* — The *remaining* Part of our Devotions consists in *supplicating* God to continue to us his Blessings, to supply all our Wants. And, what are those? The Support of our Being, with all the Necessaries, Conveniencies, and Comforts of it; *Grace* here and *eternal Glory* hereafter. And, — Now,

my Brethren, having fairly given you a plain State of the great Importance of our Business at *Church*, be so just to yourselves as to *Recollect* the *pitiful* Excuses, that often satisfy you in the Neglect of it. If you be *sincere*, your Memory cannot Fail you; if you be *not*, I shall put you out of Countenance, and provoke you, but not convert you, by mentioning them. I shall only request two very reasonable things of you. The first is; to consider *before-hand* how you may *order* your Affairs so as not to subject yourselves to the Temptation of neglecting your *Church*, for the Sake of your *present Interest*——The second is, when you find yourselves inclined to stay at Home, particularly on *Sundays*, or go Abroad either upon some Scheme of *Business*, or *Pleasure*, *seriously* to consider with yourselves (for it is a *very* serious Thing) and compare your Motives for *absenting* yourselves, with the strong and weighty Reasons for *going to Church*; and *then*, you must be *infatuated*, if you neglect *such a Duty* for *such Trifles*.

There is but one thing more, necessary towards your Instruction concerning the right manner of observing the *Sunday*, and that is, How we are to spend the remaining Part of the Day? It is a very prevailing, but very erroneous, Opinion, that the Duty of the Day does not *begin* 'till the Time of going to *Church* in the *Morning*, and that it *ends* with the *Evening Service*; not considering, that it is not only a *Part* of the Day, but the whole Day that

is appropriated to religious Uses. As the *Sunday* was intended to be kept in Memory of the *Creation*, and of our *Redemption*, we ought to contemplate upon those Subjects at *Home*, as well as make them the Subject of our Praises and Thanksgivings at *Church*. As it is sanctified to our Improvement in the Knowledge of the Doctrines and Duties of *Religion*, we should, on That Day, particularly, employ ourselves in reading the *Bible*, and other good Books (not *Romances* and *Novels*; not *Plays*, or *profane History*; not Books relating to worldly and secular Affairs; the *Sunday* was not consecrated for such Uses, but religious Books;) in order to know our Duty, and be excited to the Performance of it; and to compare our *Lives* with the *Rule* of our Actions, that we may see where we have been defective; and those who have *Families*, should see after their Instruction, as well as their own. These are the Uses for which the *Sunday* was intended; and when it is not applied in this Manner, it is profaned. No Body can say, but that these Things must be done at some Time, or another; but, unless there be some set Times for doing them, the Generality of Mankind would wholly Neglect them; which shews how expedient, I might have said, necessary, the Institution of the *Sunday* is for these religious Purposes.—But, is the whole Day so absolutely devoted to *Religion*, that no Body must make a Visit, or take any sort of Recreation, even where it can be done without

making their *Servants* and their *Cattle WORK*; especially, the *Trading* and *LABOURING* Part of Mankind, who have little *Leisure* at any other *Time*, to see their *Friends*, or for any other *Amusement*? I dare not say so.—But this I dare say, That the *less frequent*, and the *skorter* our *Visits* are, (unless, they be charitable *Visits* to the *Sick*) and the *less* *Pleasure* Men take on *Sundays*, the better; that our *Thoughts* may not be too long *interrupted*, or *indisposed*, for those serious *Subjects* which ought to employ us at that *Time*. An *Attention* to *Things foreign* to the *Business* of the *Day*, will not only *interrupt* it, but render the *Mind* less capable of doing it in a proper manner. An *Attention* to *pleasurable Objects*, or *Conversation*, will more *indispose* us for *Religion* than any *honest Calling* would do. *Light Mirth*, or any *agreeable Amusement*, dissipates *Thought*; and begets a *Levity* of *Mind* that is utterly inconsistent with That *Composure* and *Gravity* which every Part of the *Duty* of the *Day* requires. The *Rich* are the most *inexcusable* if they *trifle* away the *Sunday* in *impertinent Amusements*, because *they* have the *whole Week* at their *Command*, and are *always* at *Leisure* to take more *Pleasure* than is consistent with the *Temper*, and *Duties*, of a good *Christian*. As to the *poor*, and *busy* Part of the *World*, that I may not be *Thought rigid*, I chuse not to give you my *own Sentiments*, but I will give you the *Opinion* of a most eminent *Prelate*, so remarkable for his *Candour*,  
that



that his Enemies accused him of being *too loose* in his Notions; I mean, the *Great*, and Good Archbishop *Tillotson*; his Words are these, “ Not that we are excused from minding Religion at *other* Times; but that those who are *straitened* at other Times by the necessary Cares of this Life, may be sure to mind it *then*; and may have no Colour of Excuse for the Neglect of it at *that Time*, which God hath allotted for that very Purpose, and which it is unlawful to employ about our *worldly* Affairs. God expects that we should serve Him at *other* Times, that we should live in an *habitual* Sense of Him; but *This* He peremptorily challengeth to *Himself*, and expects that we should employ it in *his* Service, and dedicate it to *Religion*, to the Contemplation of God, and heavenly Things, with the same Seriousness and Diligence, as we do upon other Days employ our *Labour for the Meat that perisheth*; and the less Leisure (mind *This*) we have upon other Days for this Purpose, the more *entirely* should we *devote* and *consecrate* this Day, to the Purposes and Duties of *Religion*.”

And, now, upon the Whole, I appeal to any one of you, whether one Day in seven spent in such a Manner, as I have described, would not make you pleased with yourselves, beget a Tranquillity and Self-complacency of Mind at Night, and have a very great Influence upon your Thoughts and Actions during the whole Week? This is a very *rational*, but

not the *only* Motive for a due Observation of the *Sunday*. For we have Reason to expect the Displeasure and Vengeance of God, if we *profane* it; and, consequently, a particular Reward, if we conscientiously observe it. You have heard, in the Scripture History of the *Sabbath*, that the Institution was guarded with the most solemn Sanction.—If any one violates it, *He shall surely be put to Death.*—*That Soul shall be cut off.* If we look into the *Prophets*, they will tell us, how severely God has threatened, and how severely he has punished, the Breach of it. I shall cite two of them, which are very sufficient to awaken your Apprehensions. “*Neb. xiii. 16, 17, 18.* “*There dwelt Men of Tyre, also therein,* “*which brought Fish, and all Manner of* “*Ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the* “*Children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then* “*I contended with the Nobles of Judah, and* “*said unto them, What evil Thing is This* “*that ye do, and profane the Sabbath Day?* “*Did not your Fathers thus, and did not our* “*God bring all this Evil upon us, and upon* “*this City? Yet ye bring more Wrath upon* “*Israel by profaning the Sabbath.”* *Isaiab,* Chap. lviii. 13. promiseth a particular *Blessing* to those that did *not go after their own Doings*; i. e. follow the Business of *this Life*; nor *take their Pleasure on the Sabbath Day, &c.* At the xviiith Chapter *Jeremiah* tells the *Jews*, that if they *carried any Burdens out of their Houses, and through the Gates of Jerusalem, that*

if

*if they did not hallow the Sabbath Day, but did bear Burdens on the Sabbath Day; even entering in at the Gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath Day; then, God would kindle a Fire in the Gates thereof, that should devour the Palaces of Jerusalem, and that it should not be quenched;* Ver. 27. And at Ver. 24, 25. there is as great a *Blessing* promised to the *Observance* of the Sabbath, “ If you diligently hearken unto  
“ me, saith the Lord, to Bring in no Burden  
“ through the Gates of this City on the Sabbath Day; but hallow the Sabbath Day,  
“ to do no Work therein: then shall there  
“ enter into the Gates of this City, Kings and  
“ Princes sitting upon the Throne of David,  
“ riding in Chariots, and on Horses, &c. and  
“ this City shall remain for ever.”

My Brethren, Do ye really believe the *Bible* to be the *Word of God*, or do ye *not*? If ye look upon these strong Declarations of Anger and Approbation as *invented Stories*, I have cited them to no Purpose; but if they be *real Facts*, they are of great Moment, forasmuch as we have all imaginable Reason to believe that the Breach of the *Sunday* is as offensive, and the due Observance of it as acceptable, to God, now, as the Breach or Observance of the *Sabbath* was under the *Jewish* Dispensation. Nay, much more so, the *Sunday*, our *Christian Sabbath*, being appointed in Honour of *Christ*, our *Redeemer*. If God punished the *Jews* so severely for carrying Burdens, for kindling a Fire, for doing the *least Work*, or  
taking

taking their *Pleasure*, on *their Sabbath*, and not delighting, rather to spend it in *religious Exercises*; will he not take Vengeance on us *Christians*, if we follow our *ordinary Concerns* and *Recreations* on the *Sunday*, which is, in Obedience to the *Original Institution* of a *Sabbath*, and the *Fourth Commandment*, to be observed in Memory of the *Creation*, as much as the *Jewish Sabbath* was, and in Memory of a much greater Deliverance than That of the *Jews* from *Egypt*? It is intended as a Day of *Rest*, that we may be at *Leisure* to frequent *Assemblies* where *Ordinances* are administered, that are of a much higher, and more beneficial Nature, than any of the *Jewish Institutions*; where more sublime *Doctrines*, more important *Truths*, and more perfect *Precepts*, are taught, and explained. It is intended, that on this Day we should *privately* improve ourselves in the *Knowledge* and *Practice* of a more excellent Religion; fit ourselves for a State of greater *Happiness*, and avoid a greater *Misery*, than was threatened, or promised, under the *Mosaical Dispensation*. All these *Circumstances* considered, the *Guilt* of *profaning* the *Sunday* must be proportionably greater than the *Profanation* of the *Jewish Sabbath*; and can we believe that where the *Sin* is greater, the *Punishment* will be *less*? It may not be so *visible*; *Judgment* may not be *executed speedily*. The *First Covenant* was established upon *temporal Sanctions*; the *second*, upon *invisible*, and *eternal Ones*; but this

this does not *exclude* a *general*, or a *particular Providence*, that *interposes*, though not *apparently*, either to *blefs*, or to *punish Nations*, or *particular Persons*. And what can better *intitle* us to his *Favour*, than a due *Observance* of his *favourite Institution*? What more likely to bring down a *Curse* upon us, than *Disobedience* in so *tender* a Point? If God were to inflict upon us no other *Punishment* than *withdrawing* his *Grace* for neglecting so great a *Means of Improvement* in *Piety* and *Virtue*, This would exceed any *Evil* that we can suffer in *this Life*; and the *Apprehension* of so great a *Danger* ought to awaken us into a careful and regular *Discharge* of this *Important Duty*. But, whether *Chastisements* overtake us *here*, or not, we are *sure* that *Judgment*, at the *LAST GREAT DAY*, will pronounce a most severe *Sentence* upon those who have wilfully, and habitually, *profaned* the *Sunday*. It will, *then*, be of no *Signification* that they contriv'd, by *Secrecy*, to escape publick *Notice*; that silly *People* have been afraid, or ashamed, to *inform* against them; or that indolent *Magistrates* have neglected to put the *Laws* in *Execution*. All *hidden Sins* will be laid open; all such *secret Sinners* will be detected: and all such as, through *Cowardice*, or want of *Zeal* for the *Honour* of God, have not endeavoured to *prevent* such *Instances of Profanation*, will be *Sharers* in their *Punishment*, because *Partakers* with them in their *Guilt*.—I hope, there are none in this *Place* who do not believe

lieve the Certainty of a *Providence*, a *future State*, and a *future Judgment*. To all such what I have said, concerning God's Anger and Favour, must be affecting, if any Arguments can affect them: but as I intend, God willing, to *print* these Sermons, they may possibly light into the Hands of some *Infidels*; and, therefore, I shall offer some Considerations that deserve *their* Attention, because they affect their *present* Happiness.

The Happiness of Mankind in *this* Life must, in a great measure, depend upon the Peace and good Order of civil Society; witness, the many Frauds, Thefts, Robberies, Murders, Maimings, and other Crimes, which make it unsafe to place that Confidence in one another which Trade, Commerce, Friendship, and all Intercourse require; which make it dangerous to travel by Day, or sleep at Night; to go Abroad, or to stay at Home. We see, we *feel*, how Destructive these Enormities are to *social Happiness*, and have Reason to dread their quick Progress, and our *growing Danger*. These Evils are like a great Stone rolling down-hill, which rolls the faster the nearer it comes to the *Bottom*. All thinking People must be desirous of seeing a *Regulation* of such Disorders; and many are projecting the proper Means of effecting it. Many Remedies, no doubt, may conspire towards a Cure of this dangerous Distemper. I hope, in my Turn I may be allowed the Liberty of proposing one. Like most other good Medicines,  
mine

mine is very *simple*, consisting of two Ingredients, only; *Religion*, and *Virtue*. To talk of keeping the World in order without *their* Assistance, is mere *Quackery*. You may as well imagine that a Ship, with all her Sails crouded, but without Ballast or Rudder, should ride safe amidst Rocks and Shelves in a Tempest. *Infidels* pay a *Compliment* to Religion, when they intend to *vilify* Her. They suppose Her to be a Composition contrived by *Priests*, or *Politicians*. But for what Ends? For her *Utility*, for her *Necessity*, towards the Support of *Civil Society*. Is this indeed the Case? What could be a stronger Recommendation of her to those who believe no *future State*, than to say that She is *necessary* to the publick Peace and Order of the World? What can be a greater Reproach to their *Understanding*, to their *Common Sense* and *Prudence* (for as to *Conscience* they *pretend* to none) than to depreciate, and destroy, the great Means of their own Safety and Happiness? Men, in every Relation of Life, want, and desire, the friendly Aids of Religion; and yet most People slight Her, and many abuse Her.

*Religion* being acknowledged to be the great Support of *Society*, What is *the great Means* of supporting *Her*? Various are the Concurrent Helps that may be given Her, but there is *one* Means worth them all, and without which all the rest will be *ineffectual*. This is provided us by the infinite Wisdom of God. I mean, the regular Observation of the *Sunday*, in the  
Manner

Manner that I have recommended to you. What Effects it would have upon the Minds, and Manners of Men, must be obvious to the lowest Understanding that will think a little. How absolutely necessary it is, especially in our present Circumstances, will appear from a cursory View of the State of the Nation, and the Nature of Things. Can Men believe the Truths of Religion without any Evidence? Or have any Evidence without Instruction? Can they *practise* their Duty without *knowing* it? Or will they be *inclin'd* to do it, without having a Conception of the proper *Motives*? Can Men be *religious* without ever *seriously thinking* about it? And yet, it is evident that the *Generality* of Mankind, without *Compulsion*, will think of nothing but *Business* or *Pleasure*. They must owe all the little that they do know, and *practise*, of Religion, to *publick Instruction*, and *publick Worship*. If this Observation were ever true, it is more particularly so at this Time; when *Luxury* and *Voluptuousness*, those Enemies to all serious Thought and Reflection, to every Religious and Virtuous Disposition, are at so great an Height, that People neglect the Concerns of *this* Life, as well as of the next. There is a *continual Rotation* of pleasurable Amusements\* ; some

\* We have been lately told in one of the Daily Papers, that the Resort to the *Play-Houses* is so much increased within twenty Years past, that the Managers can afford to give the *first* Rate Actors 1000 *l.* a Year, and the *second* Rate 500 *l.* Such are the Wages of those who *please* and *corrupt* Mankind; while many honest Men, who have spent their Life in doing *solid Good*, are *unsupported*, *unrewarded*, and even *sighted*.



of them Inflammatory Provocatives to Lust, and calculated for intriguing; all of them tending to banish Reflection, and weaken the Mind, when it is so *constantly* attentive to them. I have not Time to paint all these Scenes of Entertainment, and describe their natural Effects, especially on *young* Minds, warm, unexperienced, fond of Pleasure, in the Heat of Blood, and impatient of Application to any thing that is of a *grave* Nature. Do not these Circumstances make it the more necessary to *oblige* all People to devote *one* Day, in *seven* to such Uses as may be an *Antidote* against such strong Poison? His Majesty, in his last Speech from the Throne, recommended it to the Consideration of *Parliament*, how to put a Stop to those Enormities, which terrify every sober Person that thinks of them. This was worthy of his Majesty's tender Care of the Happiness of his People; and I hope it will not be thought a Piece of *Presumption* in me, if I observe, that regulating publick Entertainments, and enforcing of the Observation of the *Sunday*, will be the most effectual Means of doing it.



---

# P R E F A C E.

**I** HAVE nothing more to offer; by Way of Preface to this Discourse, but that I have no other View in publishing it, besides an honest Inclination to do some Good. I have the Pleasure to find myself much affected by it, and am not without Hopes that it may have some Influence upon a few more: To be the Instrument, under God, of forwarding the Salvation of Mankind, is the greatest Honour that we can have in This Life, and the only Pleasure that is worth a wise Man's Living for. I am a Candidte for another World; and what should make an IMMORTAL Being very anxious, or much delighted, but the Thoughts of IMMORTALITY? I am Travelling to a Country from whence I shall never Return; and I

*see many of my Fellow-Travellers as intent upon their Accommodations as if They were at Home, and scrambling for what They are going to leave behind Them. I see Them with some Amazement, with more Concern, but with as little Envy as I see a Party of Children highly pleas'd with their Childish Diversions, or squabbling about their Marbles. I wish, the Employment and Amusements of a great Part of Mankind were as innocent; I am sure They are, comparatively, as insignificant.*

*READER; If you be not quite Mad, be Wise for Eternity.*

Farewell.

St. LUKE; Chap. x. Ver. 42.

*But one Thing is needful.*

**T**HOUGH the Occasion of these Words was particular, the Instruction intended to be convey'd by them is general, *viz.* That Religion, and the Security of our future Happiness, ought to be our grand Business and Concern in this Life; that they are, in their Importance, so infinitely superior to all other Considerations, that our Saviour stiles them the *One Thing needful*; nothing else, when compar'd with them, being of any Moment at all: As the longest Period of Time is swallow'd up in the immeasurable Abyss of Eternity, like a Drop of Water in the largest Ocean. This momentous and awful Truth I purpose to make the Subject of my present Discourse.

But, why so much Pains to prove what no Man in his Senses will offer to deny? Evident as this Truth is, when consider'd, it is as evident that very few consider it, so as to give it its proper Influence upon their Conduct; and therefore the most Learned, the most Knowing, the most Religious, may be the better for Admonition, when they stand in no need of Instruction. Let not any one then, be his Parts

and Attainments ever so great, disdain to read a plain Discourse. Plain, as I intend to make it, I hope, by the Grace of God assisting me, to make it so clear and strong, that it shall be the Reader's Fault if he be not the better for it. I do presume it will be allow'd me that there is such a Thing as Wisdom and Folly; that there are certain Maxims and Rules of Conduct, which are establish'd by the universal Consent and Practice of Mankind, in respect to their worldly Concerns: Upon these Maxims I purpose to argue with you; And if they have any Force, when apply'd to your Conduct in the Affairs of this Life, they must hold much stronger when apply'd to the Concerns of a future State, where our Happiness, or Misery, will be greater and more lasting, Eternal and Inconceivable. In my further Discourse upon this Subject, I shall address myself to four different Sorts of People.

*First*, To those who pretend to disbelieve the great Truths of Religion upon full Conviction, after a diligent and impartial Examination of the Evidence on both Sides of the Question.

*Secondly*, To those who only entertain some Doubts about it.

*Thirdly*, To those who never give themselves any Concern about the Matter.

*Fourthly*, To those who profess a thorough Belief of them.

*First*, I shall in the first Place address myself to those unhappy Persons who pretend to disbelieve the great Truths of Religion, upon full

Con-

Conviction, after a diligent and impartial Examination of the Evidence on both Sides of the Question. I say who *pretend* to do so, for I am fully satisfied that out of the Number of those, who profess themselves such settled Infidels, there are very few that are really such. One I knew, who died as determin'd as he liv'd; but that *Collins* and *Toland* did not, I have good Reasons to believe. Neither do I think that there ever was an Infidel who had examined the Evidence on both Sides of the Question, with Diligence and Impartiality. They may have taken a good deal of Pains to enquire into the Arguments, but then it has been with an Intent to find Objections, not to receive Information. They brought strong Prejudices and Prepossessions with them, imbib'd early by the means of bad Company, or bad Books; or else arising from the Inconsistency of religious Truths with the Indulgence of some favourite Vice which they were determin'd not to part with. But if they would act rationally, they must attend to the Evidence without any Biass from an Inclination to Infidelity. For if they wish that Religion may not appear to be true, like the Jaundice that gives a false Colour to every Object, such an Inclination will certainly hinder the Mind from seeing any Argument in its proper Light. But is this acting wisely in a Matter of such infinite Moment? For, our Inclinations cannot alter the Nature and Force of Arguments. Religion will not be the less true for our wishing that it were not so. But I will venture

ture to affirm, that, in the Nature of Things, it is utterly impossible that any Man can have sufficient Evidence upon which he may build a rational, firm Conviction, that what we call the great Truths of Religion, the Existence of a God, a Providence, and a State of Happiness, or Misery in another Life, are Fictions. On the Side of Infidelity there can be no direct Evidence at all, since no Man can demonstrate that the Supposition of a God, a Providence, and a future State, is absurd and impossible. Neither is it any Absurdity, or Contradiction to the Nature of Things, to suppose that there may be a Revelation. All that any sensible Infidel can say, is, that there is not sufficient Evidence, upon which we may build a full and clear Conviction of the Truth of these grand Points; there can be, as I said, no direct Proof on the other Side of the Question. This naturally leads me,

*Secondly,* To apply myself to those, who are in doubt about these great Truths. For Argument's Sake, I will suppose, that the Truths do not appear quite satisfactory; yet, if they carry any Degree of Credibility with them, we ought, in common Sense, to act as if there was a moral Certainty of their being true. I wou'd ask these Doubters, how they wou'd think it prudent to act under such a State of Uncertainty, with regard to their present Happiness. I will state the Matter as strongly in Favour of Infidelity and Irreligion, as I possibly can, by supposing (what every one knows to be false) the Practice of Religion and Virtue to be always attended with



an uninterrupted Series of Self-denial and Mortification, with every Sort and Degree of Evil, which human Nature is capable of suffering in this Life; and that a vicious Course of Life is as uniformly accompanied with every Sort and Degree of Happiness that human Nature is capable of enjoying. Now, let us suppose, that, if the former has the Patience to persevere in the Practice of Religion and Virtue, for one Week, under such hard Circumstances, he has a Chance (let the Chance be as low as can be imagined) of being rewarded, at the End of this short Period of Time, with an uninterrupted Series of the most consummate Happiness that human Nature is capable of enjoying for ten thousand Years; in a Country the most delightful that can be conceiv'd, and abounding with the greatest Plenty of the most valuable and agreeable Products; and constantly enjoying them with the keenest Appetite, in Company with the most instructive and agreeable Companions, always studying how to please and serve one another. Let us again suppose, that the vicious Man stands the same Chance of his being punished for his poor Week's Enjoyment, with every Sort and Degree of Misery that human Nature is capable of feeling for ten thousand Years; living in a barren Country, that does not afford one agreeable Object to please the Eyes, but is full of frightful Scenes, of Storms and Tempests; tormented with Appetites that He cannot gratify, in Company with the most disagreeable Persons, whose only Mu-

sick is the Sound of Curses, whose only Delight is to give Uneasiness to one another, and in utter Despair of having their Condition mended.

I have put a very fair Case; and if there be such a Thing as *Common Sense*, I appeal to it for an Answer. Wou'd not any Man of the lowest Share of Understanding, wou'd not any one, but a downright Madman, or Idiot, suffer such a short-liv'd Misery for the lowest Chance of such a noble Prize? Or what cou'd be thought of him, who, for the Sake of a Week's Enjoyment, wou'd run the least Hazard of being so compleatly miserable for so long a Period of Time as ten thousand Years? And does the longest Life of Man on Earth bear as great a Proportion to Eternity, as a Week does to ten thousand Years? No; the longest Period of Time bears no Proportion at all to Eternity. A Duration that is not in the Power of Numbers to measure. O! vast Eternity! how dost thou swallow up our Thoughts, and fill us at once with Delight and Amazement. Thou art like the Sight of God, so dreadful, that it is difficult for mortal Man to look on thee attentively and live. And, if the bare Conception of Eternity be so affecting, how will you be shock'd if you add the Idea of *Misery* to *Eternity*! Shou'd we form to ourselves the Imagination of immediately becoming miserable without Intermision and without Hope, during our whole Life, the very Thought wou'd make us turn  
pale

pale and tremble. Extend your Apprehension to the Age of *Methuselah*; then add a Million of Ages; go on to multiply the Product of that Sum by as many Millions as Figures can express; and then think, if you can bear the Thought, that after the Expiration of this long, long Period, you will be no nearer the End of your Misery than you was at the Beginning of it. O Eternity! What art Thou! Where am I! I am lost. My Head swims, and I grow giddy. Do thou, O blessed Jesus, strengthen my labouring Mind. I faint, I sink, do thou support my Spirits. Let me, then, thou Sceptic, beseech thee to act like a *Man*, like a *rational Creature*. I defy thee, with all thy boasted Reasoning, to demonstrate that thou shalt not be eternally happy or eternally miserable, in another Life, according as thou demeanest thyself in this. And does not the Consideration of the infinite Difference between *Time* and *Eternity* make it a Point of the greatest Wisdom to act upon much less Evidence than we have for these Truths. For, in Matters of such unspeakably great Importance, it concerns us always to be on the surest Side, where we venture least, if we shou'd happen to be mistaken. And which is the surest Side? To believe, or disbelieve Christianity, and such a State of future Rewards and Punishments as are the Sanctions of it? If Christianity be true, (and they cannot disprove the Truth of it) and there be an eternal State of Rewards and Punishments inconceivably  
great,

great, we are undone for ever ; but if we do believe it, and live up to its Precepts, we lose nothing by it but the transient Pleasures of Sin, and instead of them we have the joyfullest Hopes ; which to a good Man are more ravishing and transporting than any of the Enjoyments of this World can give to the Wicked. In short, the Miseries denounc'd against Unbelievers are so very terrible that no thinking Man in his Senses would run the least Hazard of them ; but, instead of demanding *Demonstration* of there being such a Place of exquisite Torment, wou'd demand demonstrative Certainty, that *there is not*, before he wou'd venture : And the Happiness promis'd to good Christians so far exceeds our Imagination, that a very little Evidence wou'd persuade a truly wise Man to venture any Thing for the Sake of it. Before I take Leave of these Doubters, who, professing themselves wise, act very foolishly and madly, I must observe, that tho' I have condescended to argue with them upon their own Principles, it is not because the Evidence for religious Truths is really weak and doubtful ! Had I Time I cou'd shew that it is sufficient to create a *moral Certainty*. As to myself, I no more doubt of them than if I had the Evidence of *Sense* and strict *Demonstration* to convince me. And the oftener and more attentively I examine into them the more I am convinced. And this has been the Case of Numbers in all Ages, of the greatest Abilities both natural and acquir'd, who have consider'd these

these Points with the utmost Diligence, Coolness, and Impartiality. And surely, the concurrent Testimony of such a Variety of the most learned and judicious Persons, confirming, by their Opinions and Practice, the Strength of the *positive* Evidence for Religion, both natural and reveal'd, demand so much Regard from every wise Man as to induce him not to act as if Religion were false, till he can find better Authorities and clearer Proofs in Support of *Infidelity*, or *Scepticism*. But, these Men never attempt to bring any *direct* and *positive* Proofs, but only start Difficulties, and endeavour to weaken the Force of *our* Arguments. And is this sufficient to justify them in risking the Loss of eternal Happiness, and running the Hazard of being eternally miserable? This is bringing a Scandal upon *Reason* and *Common Sense*. But I shall take the Liberty of Quoting another Illustration of their *Folly* and *Madness* from a Sermon of my own upon *Impenitency*, p. 14, 15. “ It  
“ is not enough to doubt, but you must be  
“ assur'd, by the clearest Arguments, that  
“ what the Gospel says of *Heaven* and *Hell* is  
“ all Romance, If walking in the dark, you  
“ shou'd hear a Multitude of People, with the  
“ utmost Earnestness and Concern, crying out  
“ aloud, Travellers, I beg of you to quit your  
“ Road instantly, for it leads to a bottomless  
“ Pit, where you will lie in Pain and Misery  
“ for ever, and you are got upon the Brink of  
“ it. Tho' you shou'd not immediately be  
“ fully

“ fully convinc’d, wou’d not the *bare Possibi-*  
 “ *lity* of its being true, the frightful Appre-  
 “ hension, make you take another Road, if  
 “ you knew of one where there cou’d be no  
 “ such Danger? I say, wou’d you in such a  
 “ Case dare to move one Step farther in it?  
 “ No, you cou’d not do it. Your Imagination  
 “ wou’d fill your Mind with such Horror, that  
 “ your Limbs, as well as your Heart, wou’d  
 “ fail you. This, thou Doubter, is a true,  
 “ but faint Image of thy Condition. You are  
 “ walking in thick Darknes, not knowing  
 “ whither your present Course of Life will  
 “ lead you. Under this Uncertainty you hear  
 “ the Prophets, the Apostles, the Martyrs,  
 “ and Confessors for Christianity; you hear  
 “ Teachers and Writers, without Number,  
 “ in all Ages, and from all Parts of the  
 “ World, crying, Hold, miserable Wretch!  
 “ the Path in which you are now going will  
 “ lead you to eternal Destruction. If you will  
 “ take the contrary Road, you will find it, in  
 “ general, full as pleasant, and, in some Parts  
 “ of it, much pleasanter, and it will carry  
 “ you safe to a most delightful Country. And,  
 “ for your Encouragement to take our Advice,  
 “ we are so far from having any Interest, or  
 “ bad Design, in giving you this Intelligence,  
 “ that we take the same Road, ourselves, but  
 “ not before we had us’d all possible Means  
 “ of Information concerning the Nature and  
 “ Tendency of it. You see how foolishly and  
 “ madly they act, let not therefore their Cha-  
 “ racters,

“ racters, be their Rank, their Parts, their  
“ Reputation, what they will, any way in-  
“ fluence your Judgment, or Practice, but  
“ look upon them, as they are, Objects of  
“ Compassion for their Unhappiness, and of  
“ Indignation for their Wickedness.” But

*Thirdly*, There is another Set of Men, who, if possible, act more foolishly and madly, than either of the other. For, though these Points must be acknowledg'd to be of the last Importance, they have never thought it worth while to consider them, never thought of them, at all, but live extempory Lives; follow the Impulse of every Passion that happens to move them; pursue every Scheme that occurs to their Mind; without ever looking forward to Consequences. The others judge and act extremely wrong, unbecoming Philosophers; but these Men act below the Conduct of the *Animal* Part of the Creation. *Beasts* and *Birds* act with more Regard to Self-Preservation. As far as *Instinct* teaches them wherein their Danger lies, they are ever watchful, ever studious, to avoid it. Only these *Beasts* of *Reason* act without any Regard to their own Safety. In order to illustrate the exceeding great Folly of these heedless, giddy Creatures, I shall borrow another Illustration from the Sermon above-mention'd, p. 8. “ Suppose a skilful  
“ Architect should give a Man Warning that  
“ his House is so decay'd, that it is in Danger  
“ of tumbling over his Head, shou'd not such  
“ Notice oblige him in common Prudence  
“ either

“ either to quit it instantly, or, at least, to  
 “ have it carefully examin’d, before he ven-  
 “ tures to continue in it? And, if, notwith-  
 “ standing this friendly Caution, he shou’d  
 “ strive, by Business, or Pleasure, to divert  
 “ his Thoughts from attending to his Danger,  
 “ instead of avoiding it, wou’d not the World  
 “ say that the Man was distracted, or that he  
 “ was utterly void of common Sense? And,  
 “ yet, this is an exact Picture of this mon-  
 “ strous Indolency.” I must own a Mistake;   
 for the Case is not *parallel*. The Men of whom  
 I am speaking, have Warning of a Danger in-  
 finitely greater, and, yet, are as unmov’d by  
 it. And if any accidental Cause shou’d force  
 them to entertain a transient Thought of their  
 Danger, they are very industrious to banish it  
 out of their Minds; as if they could take away  
 the *Reality* and *Certainty* of their future Misery  
 by not thinking of it. But, as they are not  
 likely to attend to any Thing that can be said  
 to them, I shall say no more upon this Head.  
 I should have been quite silent, if I had not  
 been in Hopes that others might learn Wis-  
 dom by seeing a strong Picture of *their* Folly.  
 I come, now

In the *Fourth*, and last, Place seriously to  
 address myself to those who profess a thorough  
 Belief of religious Truths: And I must tell  
 such Christian Readers, that, in some Respects,  
 they act more inconsistently and absurdly than  
 either of the other three Sorts of People. The  
 First pretend to be fully persuaded that Reli-  
 gion



gion is a *Cheat*, and that there is no such Thing as a *future State*; in Consequence of which Persuasion, they think it prudent to make the most of this World, to make their own present Interest and Happiness the sole Rule of their Conduct. They judge wrong in entertaining such a settled Opinion, where there can be no positive Proof; but they act right upon their Principles. The Second Sort are as much to blame, in running the Risque of losing eternal Happiness, and bringing eternal Destruction upon themselves, only because the Evidence for the Truth of those grand Points does not appear to them sufficiently clear and strong, for, in Matters of such infinite Moment, a less Degree, any Degree, of Evidence ought to govern their Conduct; but grant them their Premises and their Conclusion will be just. The Third Sort act as absurdly, but with some Difference. The next World is invisible and distant; the Things of this World are present and visible; from whence they conclude that it is not worth their while to trouble themselves about such Matters. They agree with the others in acting very madly, but they differ in this Circumstance, that, whereas the former act right upon wrong Principles, these act wrong in Consequence of just Premises. It is true, that this World is present and visible, but it does not follow from thence that invisible and distant Things cannot be worth the Consideration of a wise Man. But these last Sort of *Fools* and *Madmen*, are in every Respect  
incon-

inconsistent and inexcusable, for, they act in Defiance of their settled Principles; they believe Christianity, they publicly profess their Belief of it; and yet daily, hourly, and deliberately contradict their Faith in their Practice: Have the Patience to give Attention while I enlarge a little upon the monstrous Inconsistency of such Conduct. I have a Right to demand this of you, because you acknowledge that the Subject is of such vast Moment, that it deserves your most attentive Consideration.

The first great Truth and Foundation of all Religion is, the Belief of a Deity who made you, and made you capable of knowing and contemplating and imitating his moral Perfections; you profess to believe that *Reason* and *Revelation* teach you that it is your Duty, and will be your Happiness, so to do; and yet, how many nominal Christians ever think seriously; how many scarce ever think at all, about the Nature and Attributes of this adorable Author of their Being, and Fountain of their Happiness; unless it be now and then, when they are put in Mind of him at Church, or in Conversation. You profess to believe that this Being, infinitely wise, just, good, and powerful, governs the World; and do Christians in general act agreeably to this Persuasion? Do they submit and resign themselves to his Dispensations? No, if they did, whence so much fretting, so much murmuring, so much Distrust under any Afflictions and Disappointments? Whence so many indirect Means to extricate ourselves, when we believe

believe and acknowledge that if we trust in him, and apply to him, every thing shall work together for our Good; that he will either remove our Difficulties, or support us under them, or reward us for bearing them patiently? You believe that it is your Duty privately and publickly to worship God, as frequently, as attentively, and as fervently as possibly you can; and yet how many of you never address yourselves to him in Prayer in private, or with your Family? How often do you neglect publick Worship upon such scandalously trifling Pretences, as wou'd not hinder you from going to make a common Visit, or taking your Pleasure? And when you are at your Devotions, with what Inattention, with what Coldness and Irreverence do you perform them? I do not mean only the poor and illiterate, but Persons of better Education and more Knowledge; not excepting some of the Great, and the Learned. And can such People sincerely believe that Religion is the one Thing needful? You must bear with my honest Freedom a little longer.

Christians believe the Bible to be the Word of God; that it is an inestimable Treasure of the most excellent, the most useful, and entertaining Knowledge; that it contains every Thing that is necessary for us to believe and practise, in order to our eternal Happiness; that it is both in Respect to the Author, and Subject Matter of it, worthy of the most profound Reverence, and constant and most careful Perusal. And

do Christians in general, like holy *David*, make it their constant Study and chief Delight? No, they seldom look into it, as if it were the most dull and insipid, the most trifling and useles Book that ever was publish'd. Nay, (I hope to be excus'd on Account of an honest Intention) I have too much Reason to fear that many *Scholars*, tho' they occasionally look into it as *Critics*, and *Commentators*, to study the Sense of a difficult Passage, do not read it daily, and practically, to direct their Conduct in moral Life, and to warm their Hearts with a feeling Sense of Piety. But is this shewing that you believe Religion to be the one Thing needful? Wou'd you treat any Book with such Contempt, that taught you any infallible Way to Success in Trade, to Riches and Honours. I need not wait for an Answer. Christianity tells us [and you profess your Belief of it] that the Way to eternal Life is narrow, and that we must strive to enter into it; that we have many strong Passions and Habits to subdue; many difficult Virtues to acquire; many Temptations to seduce us; many Enemies within our own corrupt Hearts to betray us; many subtle, vigilant, potent Enemies from without, to allure and terrify us; that we are always wrestling, not only against Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities and Powers, against spiritual Wickedness in high Places; that we are to be perpetually upon our Guard against the Wiles of the Devil and his Agents, as well as against the

the Treachery of our corrupt Nature; to take heed to our Ways, to keep the Door of our Lips, and to watch the secret Motions of our Thoughts; and therefore, that the working out of our Salvation being a Thing of such Labour and Difficulty, as well as infinite Importance, we ought to do it with Fear and Trembling. But let any one look round upon Mankind and observe, whether their Looks and Actions speak any such State of Warfare and Danger. Instead of being anxious for the Event of so momentous an Affair as our eternal Salvation, they look quite easy and unconcern'd; Instead of being vigilant, they are quite careless; instead of being active, they are quite indolent. And is this Behaviour consistent with a Persuasion that we think our future Welfare the one Thing needful? The Professors of Christianity declare that they are Citizens of another Country, that their true Riches are in Heaven, and that their heavenly Treasure will be as durable, and inconceivable, as the Torments of the Wicked; and yet Christians in general are so far from having their Thoughts so full of an Immortality of such a Bliss, as to have it always lie uppermost for a constant governing Principle, that they seldom think of it. Their Thoughts, their Inclinations, their Maxims and Schemes, are all sensual, and worldly. One Man is wholly intent upon a Circle of Amusements and Diversions. This is the grand Business of his *animal* Life. Another is as in-

tent upon accumulating Wealth and making a Family; his Head and Heart are quite full of it. A Third is wholly possessed with ambitious Desires; Places and Honours he must have, let the Means of acquiring Them be ever so inconsistent with the Precepts of his Religion, and his future Happiness and Glory. It is impossible that such Men shou'd think their Salvation the one Thing needful, when they take so little Care to secure it. And yet these narrow minded *Creatures* (I cannot call them *Men*) think themselves, and are thought by others to be, the only shrewd People, because they value the poor, beggarly Concerns of this Life above those of Eternity. O gracious God! whence arises this Sottishness? It is thou only, the Searcher of Hearts, that knowest the true Cause. Do thou take the Veil from before our Eyes. Break the Charm that bewitches us. Convince us that nothing but *Eternity* deserves our Solitude; that our Salvation is the one Thing needful, and that whatever does not tend to it is Vanity and Folly. Make us see more clearly, and know more feelingly, these great Truths. Let them always be uppermost in our Thoughts, and give them such Force and Energy, that they may bring forth in us the Fruits of good Living, to thy Honour, and the Salvation of our Souls.

HEBREWS, Chap. x. Ver. 25.

*Not forsaking the Assembling of ourselves together, as the Manner of some is, but exhorting one another.*

**T**HIS Precept was given by St. Paul in the Times of *Persecution*; which occasion'd many to absent themselves from religious Meetings, for the Preservation of their Lives, their Liberties, and Estates. *We* are not under That Temptation to neglect *our* Duty; yet, in most Places it is shamefully neglected; and Men are so far from *exhorting*, that they are more apt to *discourage*, one another, by speaking lightly of it. It cannot, therefore, be *unseasonable*, and I hope, it will not be *unprofitable*, if I discourse to you upon the Three following Heads.

*First*, That the forsaking of such Assemblies is a virtual Defection from the Christian Faith, and a Renunciation of our Religion.

*Secondly*, That it is a Neglect of the necessary Means of Grace without which we shall not be able, or willing, to practise the other Duties of Religion, or long to preserve in our Minds any true Sense of it.

*Thirdly*, To enforce the Duty of Exhorting one another to Assemble ourselves.

*First*, The forsaking the Assembling of ourselves together for publick Worship is a virtual Defection from the Christian Faith, and a Renunciation of our Religion.

For, what is the End of such Assemblies, but to make publick Profession of our religious Opinions; to acknowledge the Being, Attributes, and Dispensations of That God, in whom we believe; our Relations, and Obligations to him for our Creation, Preservation, and Redemption? And our refusing publickly to testify This our Belief, is, in Effect, to declare that we do not believe them. There never was any People in the World, who believed a God, and yet did not publickly worship him agreeably to their Notions of him.

The *Heathens*, however different in their Opinions concerning their Deities, in different Countries, agreed in this great Article, *viz.* to join together in a publick Acknowledgment of God and his Providence over them. As they all ow'd their Being and the Continuance of it to the Power of their Creator, they all, as many as conveniently could, assembled together to testify their common Dependance upon him. As they were conscious that they had all been guilty of many Things which were offensive and displeasing to the Deity, they united in offering up such Oblations and Sacrifices, as they thought might be the  
Means



Means of appeasing God's Anger, and averting his Judgments. As they believ'd that he continually interpos'd to over-rule and govern the Affairs of the World, they offer'd up their joint and publick Requests, that he wou'd protect and bless them. This was so universal a Practice, and it is a Practice so agreable to *natural Reason*, that if any one had been known wholly to withdraw himself from such religious Meetings, He wou'd have been deem'd an Atheist, who deny'd God's Being and Providence; he wou'd have been wonder'd at as a Monster; he wou'd have been detested as an odious and dangerous Person; he wou'd have been executed, or banish'd the Society, as one disqualified for it.

The Religion of the *Jews* was different from That of the *Heathens*, but they agreed with them in having Assemblies wherein they jointly and publickly worship'd their God, suitably to their Faith. Besides the Truths of *Natural Religion*, they were favour'd with *particular Revelations* of God's Nature and Will, and they were enjoin'd *particular Duties and Ordinances*; in Consequence of which they had those *particular Revelations* publickly read before them, and their *Laws* publickly recited: they united, likewise, in the publick Observance of their *peculiar Ordinances*. And, can we imagine, that if any *one* among these *Jews* had *totally*, or *generally*, absented himself from their religious Assemblies, *never*, or *seldom*,

appearing to hear the Word of their God read, and his Laws rehears'd to them; *never*, or *seldom* assisting at the *common Rites* and *Ceremonies*; never partaking with them of the *common Ordinances* of their Religion: Can we imagine, I say, that such an one wou'd not have been thought, and very justly, to have thereby disown'd his Belief of the *Jewish Religion*?

The Religion of us *Christians* is different from that of the *Jews*, as the *Jewish Religion* was different from that of the *Heathens*. WE have still more extraordinary Discoveries of the Nature and Will of God; our Duty in the New Testament is more particularly explain'd to us, and we have common Ordinances, tho' fewer in Number, appointed us. Whoever, therefore, after the Manner of too many *nominal Christians*, refuses to appear at our Christian Assemblies, there to hear the *Scriptures* read and expounded, there publickly to profess the *Doctrines*, and attend upon the *Institutions*, of our Religion; such an one St. *Paul*, the inspired Apostle of *Jesus Christ*; such an one the *Nature* and *Reason* of the Thing, declare to be an *Apostate* from the *Faith*, and to have rejected the Authority of our *blessed Saviour*. If he *never*, or *seldom* goes to any Place of publick Worship, nor makes any Kind of publick Profession of some Religion, we have no Room to believe that he has any religious Opinions at all, nor has he any Right to the Protection and Benefits  
of

of the Community, of which he is a Member, because he can give no Security to it for his good Behaviour, as having no Principles, no Conscience to bind him to it. If there be any Persons among *us* so unhappy in their Education, so aukward in their Way of Thinking, that they cannot see sufficient Evidence for the Truth of *Revelation* after the most diligent and impartial Enquiry [which, however, cannot well be suppos'd] we will believe them to be in Earnest, when we see them seriously applying to *Parliament*, as all other *Dissenters* from the *establish'd* Religion have done, for the Liberty of worshipping God in their own Way. But, while they worship no God at all, we are to consider them as perfect *Infidels*, who deny his Existence, or, at best, as *Epicureans*, who deny his Providence, both which Notions are equally absurd in themselves and equally detrimental to Society. And, yet, in Opposition to the Sentiments of *St. Paul*, to the Reproach of *Common Sense*, to the great Scandal and Prejudice of our *Country*, Men, who make no Manner of Profession of any Religion, nay, and who openly profess that they have none, and make a Jest of all that have any, are not only permitted to call themselves by the honourable Name of *Christians*, not only to enjoy the common Privileges of a *Christian Community*, but are admitted, frequently, into the most reputable Situations, into Places of Trust  
and

and Power, into the Familiarity and Intimacy of the most respected, best beloved Friends.\*

Thus we see that the Assembling of ourselves together for publick Worship is so *essential* to Religion, that a *total*, or *general*, Abstinence from them, (for an *occasional* Attendance may be resolv'd into Curiosity, or temporal Interest, and so consequently can be no Argument of our Faith) is to be understood as a Renunciation of it; which, I think, is a very sufficient Proof of the great Importance of the Duty.

But, as it is in its own Nature so much of the *Essence* of Religion, that we cannot rea-

\* These *Infidels* generally affect to pass under the Denomination of *Deists*; but upon an Acquaintance with Them, (as I have had with several; and, having been faithful in not betraying the Confidence which They placed in Me, They spoke their Sentiments without any Reserve) They always *profess'd* Themselves *Infidels at large*, who believ'd no Religious Truths at all. Even These *Atkeists*, tho' They cannot be oblig'd in *Conscience*, (there being no such Thing as *Conscience* without a *God*) if there could be such a Thing as a *Tie*, or *OBLIGATION*, upon Them, would be *oblig'd*, to encourage some Sort of publick *Worship*, because it has been, from *Experience*, the Opinion of All *Agés* and *Nations*, that *Society* cannot subsist without *Virtue*, nor *Virtue* without *Religious* *WORSHIP*. The *publick Good* requires This from Them; and, if there be no Being that sees into their Hearts, and can call Them to an Account for it, They cannot have any reasonable Scruples about Acting an *Hypocritical* Part. It must be to Them as *indifferent* a Thing as taking a Walk, or spending an Hour in any other Way, whether of *Business*, or *Amusement*. I have been credibly inform'd that, upon This Persuasion, *Collins* went to Church very regularly, for the Sake of setting an *Example*, tho' his *Vanity* made Him spoil all by Employing himself in *Reading something else*, instead of *Appearing* to join in the Service.

sonably

sonably pretend to any Religion without it; so is it, likewise, a necessary *Means* of Religion; necessary in Order to preserve in our Minds a true Sense of it, and to enable us to perform the Duties of it—And it is a *Means* of Religion both in a *natural*, and *preternatural* Way.

First, It is in itself a *natural* Means of improving our religious Sentiments and Dispositions.—For, what can more *naturally* tend to give us an awful Sense of God, a Love and Fear of him, than our Assembling together to acknowledge him with united Voices, to be the common Parent and Support of the whole World? To celebrate his adorable Perfections? And to pay our joint Tribute of Thanksgiving for the many Instances of his Goodness to us? The very Exercise of these religious Acts will help to increase the religious Thoughts from whence they flow. They act upon each other like the Soul and the Body; and, by the Help of the *Senses*, will produce much stranger Effects than any *private* Meditations, or Addresses to God. In the Performance of *publick*, or *joint*, Prayer, the Looks, and Gestures, and Voices of the Congregation will excite and inflame in each other pious Affections. For Instance, The united Voice of a Number of People, confessing their Sins to God with a proper Tone of Voice, accompanied with suitable Looks and Gestures, expressive of Sorrow, and Shame, and Fear; This, I say, will have  
a much

a much greater Effect towards answering the proper Ends of Confession than a *private* Acknowledgment of their Sins is naturally fitted to produce, because the Condition of the Mind, during its Union with the Body, is such, that it necessarily receives strong Impressions from *external* Objects. In like Manner the Voice of Joy and Gratitude, in our Songs of Praise and Thanksgiving, will help to produce, or increase, those Emotions and Affections of which they are naturally expressive. I am not now using any abstracted, or difficult Arguments, but only speaking what every one of you knows, and feels to be true.

Tho' these be *natural* Means, which, assisted by the *supernatural* Influence of God's holy Spirit, will produce their genuine Effects of Piety, and Virtue; yet, they will not, *alone*, answer those great Ends. *Grace* assists *natural Means*, and does not operate *without* them, tho' it *cou'd* act as *instantaneously*, as when the Word of God's Power spake the World into Being. But, *second Causes* in *religious* Matters will do nothing without the Concurrence of God, the *First Cause* of all Things. If a Person, without any Devotion were to be present in a Congregation, where the most ardent Piety was express'd in their Looks, their Voices, and their Gestures, he wou'd as naturally and necessarily find himself affected, as a Man is mov'd by a fine Picture,

a musical Voice, or a good Instrument: but, they wou'd not produce any permanent Effects towards making him a better Christian, without the secret Operation of the original Fountain of all *divine*, as well as *natural* Life. The same *Spirit* which first mov'd upon the Face of the Waters, must move upon our Hearts. The *natural* Means are to our Souls, like the Wood upon the Altar, which was lighted by the Fire that descended from above. The Necessity of God's *preventing* and *assisting* Grace, towards an acceptable Performance of our Duty, is plainly asserted in the tenth Article of our Church, in these Words: " The  
" Condition of Man after the Fall of *Adam* is  
" such, that he cannot turn and prepare him-  
" self, by his *own natural* Strength, and good  
" Works, to Faith and Calling upon God.  
" Wherefore, we have no Power to do good  
" Works pleasant and acceptable to God  
" without the Grace of God preventing us,  
" that we may have a good Will, and work-  
" ing with us when we *have* That good  
" Will." The same Notion runs through our whole Liturgy. I make no Doubt but that those *Heathens*, who made such considerable Advances in the Knowledge of God, and Improvements in moral Virtues, had some *extraordinary* Assistances, tho' in a much lower Degree than *good Christians* enjoy that heavenly Gift. When *Tully*, one of the most eminent of them says, every extraordinary Genius had the  
the

the Benefit of some divine Communications; it is probable that under the Notion of a divine *Afflatus*, or *Inspiration*, he did not only mean some *preternatural Illuminations* to direct the *Understanding*, but, some *Influence* to incline the perverse Tendency of the *Will*, and mend the deprav'd Affections of the *Heart*, since he must have been sensible that They stood in as much Need of some *foreign Aid*, as the *intellectual Faculties*. Some others among them deliver'd this Notion in still more express Terms. Tho' the *Old Testament* contains no express Promise of the Assistances of the Spirit, it is evident that the holy Men under That Dispensation had a Persuasion of such Assistance, and prayed for it. The *Royal Prophet* is a strong Proof of the Fact. He prays God to *open*, and *turn his Eyes*; to *unite* and *incline his Heart*; to *make him to go*; to *guide* and *lead him*; to *create in him a clean Heart*, and *renew a right Spirit within him*. *Solomon*, also, says that *God giveth Wisdom*; that he *directs Mens Paths*, and *giveth Grace to the lowly*. But, that these great Advantages were to be enjoy'd in fuller Measure under the *Christian Covenant of Grace and Truth*, than under the *Jewish Dispensation*, we learn from the *Prophecies*. Take That remarkable one of *Jeremiah* for an Instance. *I will put my Law in their inward Parts, and write it in their Hearts, They shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest*. But, *Ezekiel* still

more



more plainly. A new Heart also will I give, and a new Spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony Heart out of your Flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my Statutes, and ye shall keep my Judgments and do them. And, that these Prophecies do relate to the Gospel Dispensation cannot be question'd since *Jeremiah's* Words, to which the others are equivalent, are cited and apply'd to it in the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. Our blessed Saviour in his last Discourse to his Disciples tells them, " That his heavenly Father would give the holy Spirit to every one that asked him." Again, he says " My Father and I will make our Abode with him." Without me ye can do Nothing. Our Bodies are said to be Temples of God, holy Habitations to him through the Spirit. St. Paul speaks of the Love of God shed abroad in our Hearts by the Spirit. He prays often for the Churches, that God would stablish, comfort, and perfect them, enlighten and strengthen them. It is said, that God open'd the Heart of *Lydia*, so that she attended to the Things that were spoken of St. Paul. And God is said to work in us both to will and to do of his good Pleasure. These and many other Places put it beyond all Manner of Doubt that there are inward Communications from God to the Powers of the Soul, by which we are made both to apprehend the Truths of Religion, to remember, and reflect on them, and to consider and follow them

more

80 *The Duty of Assembling ourselves.*

more effectually. Some Places, indeed, where the Gifts of the *Spirit* are spoken of, either *prophetically* in the *Old Testament*, by way of *Promise* by our Saviour in the *New*, or by way of *Doctrine*, *Direction*, *Exhortation* and *Comfort* by the *Apostles*, may signify more immediately those extraordinary Powers of working *Miracles* for the Establishment of Christianity; yet, many of them, if not all that I have cited, are incapable of being restrained to those temporary Gifts which ceased after the Establishment of Christianity, but are equally applicable to Christians in general, and must relate to the ordinary and common Exigencies of Christians to the End of the World. But, how are we to acquire these Assistances of the *holy Spirit* which are thus absolutely necessary to a Christian Life? Before we can receive any Nutriment from the Stock, we must become Branches by Ingraftment. Before our carnal Nature can receive any new Principle of spiritual Life, we must be born again of *Water* and the *holy Spirit* at our *Baptism*. By this divine Institution we, who were by *Nature* dead to all good Dispositions and Resolutions, acquire an *inward Principle* of *Holiness*. But, as the *natural* Life must be supported by continual Supplies, and our Strength and Vigour will be in Proportion to our Care in the Use of the common *Means* of *Health*, so our *spiritual* Growth and Improvement will keep Pace with our Endeavours, and Attendance upon

upon those *Ordinances* which God has appointed as the *Means* of conveying his Grace. God doth not *inspire* us with the Knowledge of our Duty, as he imparted divine Truths to the *Apostles*; neither will he *instantaneously* and *irresistibly* infuse good Dispositions into us, as he converted *St. Paul*. We must diligently read, and seriously meditate. Like *holy David*, we must make God's Law our Study, as often as the necessary Affairs of Life will permit, and always upon the *Sunday*, the Day set apart, by the Authority of God and Man, for that Purpose. We must commune with our Heart in our Chamber and be still, retir'd from the Noise and Bustle of the World; and then we may be assur'd of God's Blessing upon These Means of Knowledge and Improvement. Provided always, that we ask for it by diligent Prayer. God will give his Spirit, but it is to those who *ask* it. *Ask and ye shall have, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be open'd* unto you; which is a plain Declaration that if we obstinately refuse, or carelessly neglect, to use these *appointed Means*, *viz. Prayer*, we are not to expect his Grace. But *publick* and *joint* Prayer, as it does more Honour, so it is more acceptable to the supreme Being than *private* Devotion; and he has assur'd us that he will be more ready to receive, and answer those Petitions. *Where two or three are gather'd together in his Name*, there is God more immediately present by his

*Angels*, and by his gracious Acceptance, and Influence. Such Devotions receive Strength not only from their *Union*, but from the *Sacredness* of the *Place* where they are offer'd, and of the *Person* who offers them. They are, both of them, in the most solemn Manner *dedicated* to God himself for That Purpose; and it wou'd be reasonable to believe, tho' he had made no exprefs Declaration of his Will, that he shou'd accompany the Observance of his *own Institutions* with peculiar Marks of his Favour. And, if there can be any one Act of CHRISTIAN Worship preferable to another; in its Nature more affecting; in its Institution more solemn; in its Effects more beneficial, and a greater Means of Grace; it is the *blessed Sacrament* of our Lord's Supper; that divine and awful Institution, appointed for the Commemoration of his Death, which was the Purchase of all the Gifts of the holy Spirit. *There* we have the closest Union and Communion with Christ, of which we are capable in this Life. *There* we dwell in him, and he in us; we are *one with Christ*, and he *with us*. *There*, therefore, we may expect to receive the most intimate Communications of his heavenly Grace and Favour.

After what has been said it can be no Wonder to you, if those who wilfully and habitually forsake the Assembling themselves together for *Christian Worship* [which is not only a necessary Manner of professing ourselves

selves Christians, but the necessary Means of preserving a true Sense of Religion in our Minds, and of obtaining the divine Assistance without which we cannot possibly be truly religious:] It can be no Wonder, I say, that *such* should fall away into *Infidelity* or *Immorality*; or that those who seldom attend upon publick Worship, shou'd be weak in Faith, and very imperfect in the Discharge of their Duty. These Effects are as natural as it is for a Man to die, who takes in no Sustenance to support Life, and to be sickly if he does not take enough to keep Him in Health.

I have left myself but little Time for the last Head of my Discourse, but I must bear hard upon your Patience while I say *something* upon so *material* a Point, as That of the Duty of exhorting one another to a due Attendance upon publick Worship.

It is Part of our blessed Lord's Prayer, (which ought to be our *daily* Prayer) that God's Will *may be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven*. The *Angels* in Heaven are continually attending upon God to receive his Commands; and if we imitate these ministring Spirits in their Readiness and Alacrity in executing their Commissions from their heavenly King, we shall exhort one another to repair, as often as we can, to the Courts of the Lord's House, in Honour of his most glorious Name, and in Obedience to his Commands.

But, *Charity* likewise requires This of us. A good-natur'd Man wou'd be forward to give an ignorant and inadvertent Neighbour Advice in any important Affair, or to warn him of any approaching Danger. Now, I wou'd ask any Man in his Senses what can be of greater Importance than the publick Worship of our Maker, who gave us our Being and continually sustains us by his Almighty Power; of our universal Governor who by his watchful Providence preserves us; of our blessed Redeemer who saved us from Destruction, and purchas'd for us eternal Happiness; of our tremendous Judge who is to pass an irreversible Sentence upon us at the last great and solemn Audit of the World? Or, what greater Danger can attend any one than the Danger of losing his Title to the Blessings of God's Providence by refusing publickly to acknowledge them; of losing the blessed Influences of God's Grace by neglecting the Means of obtaining it; of incurring his most heavy Displeasure by openly slighting him? If, therefore, you have any Bowels of Compassion, it must be a Concern to you to see any of your Brethren so unmindful of their Security, so wanting to their own Happiness. I will be bold to say, that an *Unconcernedness* on these Occasions is a plain Proof that Men are not, themselves, truly sensible of the vast Importance of religious Worship, or they wou'd leave no Arts of Persuasion unattempted to prevail

prevail upon each other to attend it. *Neighbours* wou'd decently remind; *Friends* wou'd kindly and importunately intreat; *Parents* and *Masters*, instead of setting a bad Example, wou'd peremptorily command; *Church-Officers* wou'd regularly present Absenters; and *Magistrates* wou'd rigorously execute the Laws upon them.

The *Clergy* are more particularly oblig'd to be instant in Season and out of Season, whether the People will hear or whether they will forbear. *Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy Neighbour; and not suffer Sin upon him.* This is a Direction given to *all* Christians; but the *Clergy* are commanded to do it with all Authority and Severity, and that publickly where the Crime is of a publick Nature, and the Remissness of their People requires a sharp Admonition. But, as this is a Part of my Office very disagreeable to my Temper, so I hope you will give me no Occasion to exercise it. Yet, as I cannot wholly acquit you of Neglect, especially those of you, who have no Pretence, from Business, and whose Duty it is to set a good Example to their Inferiors; those who think it sufficient to serve God on one Part of the Day, and lawful to indulge and divert themselves either at Home, or Abroad, on the other; those who take the Opportunity of doing that on the *Sunday* which they cannot do on any other Day without some Hindrance

Hindrance to their worldly Business; all such (and some such there are amongst us) with an Earnestness becoming the Greatness of their Danger, and my Concern, but with a Tenderness agreeable to my Affection for them, I exhort, I beseech, I conjure to attend the publick Worship of God as often as possible, and also to see that their Families do their Duty in This great Article of it, that They may not be Partakers with them in this sinful Neglect.

*F I N I S.*





BOOKS publish'd by the same AUTHOR.

A SERMON against *Popery*, preach'd at the Time of the last *Rebellion*; and a Pamphlet in Defence of his Majesty's *Hereditary Title* to the Crown. Both publish'd by Deputy *John Clark*, by the *Royal Exchange*.

The Nature and Duty of Benevolence,

The Nature and Duty of Living peaceably with all Men.

An Appeal to the *Common Sense*, &c. of the *Laity* concerning *Tithes*. All Three publish'd by *W. Ruffel*, at *Horace's Head* without *Temple-Bar*.

Three Dialogues upon *Anger* and *Forgiveness*; publish'd by *Mr. Owen* within *Temple-Bar*.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PHYSICS DEPARTMENT

REPORT OF THE

COMMISSIONERS

FOR THE YEAR

1880-81

CHICAGO, ILL.

1881

PRINTED BY

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CHICAGO, ILL.

1881











